



Gardening is a metaphor of life. There are so many actions, reactions, and outcomes. The process and progress of our gardens can be slow, like waiting for seeds to germinate, flowers to bloom, or the landscaper to show up. It is sometimes a gradual process as one season/year slips into the next or . . . the pure chaos that we have after a storm, or flood, or both.

Gardening is work and worry. It can cost lots of money, time, and energy to have all that beauty; or you can take the “path of least resistance.”

Give up the worry first. It doesn't add a cubit to your life or landscape. Look for natural patterns and forms. If something doesn't bring you joy don't keep it. Margot Rochester, a very intuitive garden writer, said that it is important to pace yourself and have reasonable expectations of the time it takes to do garden tasks. I think she had a limit of three things to do at a time. Some things take a few minutes, others an hour. I'm giving myself a year to get the acre or so that I used to maintain back into some kind of sustainable garden. Luckily my neighbors are far enough away.

Have realistic goals. Is the task something you can do yourself? Can I organize a work party with some friends and food? Do I need to pay a professional with the appropriate tools and equipment? How much is it going to cost? How long will it take?

I had recently moved to St. Helena Island when one morning, after a storm had blown by the night before, my neighbor, Mrs. Godley, was out in her yard picking up sticks. I remember her in her jacket, rain bonnet and sturdy shoes saying, “These sticks will be here when I'm gone, but I'm picking them up today.”

Less is more. It is such a liberating act to de-clutter. Do I really need to keep all those broken tools, wheelbarrows, and flower pots? When I look out of my windows I want to see a well-kept yard. I see overgrown shrubs, fallen trees and piles of branches.

I am choosing the easy path for now. The woods are full of birds rebuilding their blown down nests. My neighbor is rebuilding his dock that mostly floated away. My goals are simple. I will enjoy the things that make me happy: loving and caring relationships with friends and family, meaningful and productive work, music, helping others, and picking up sticks.

Gardening should be therapeutic; garden with a friend, hopefully, a young one.