

Lynn Headrick's Tomatoes

October 1994

During our four years in London, Melanie and I occasionally longed for a real, vine-ripe tomato to slap on a burger. In spite of the antiquity of British society, the Brits have yet to figure out how to grow a juicy, red, sweet tomato. So, when we arrived in Hueytown, we were pleasantly surprised to find tomato plants growing in the back yard of our new home.

Sometime in the spring of 1994, Lynn Headrick had turned up the soil, planted tomato seeds, erected support fencing, fertilized, watered, weeded, and then waited for the fruit of his labor. In the course of time, he was rewarded with those fresh, succulent tomatoes that we could only eat in our dreams.

But about mid-summer, brother Headrick moved from Hueytown, and it was our good fortune to inherit his home, his well-kept lawn, and, crucially, his tomato plants. During our first few weeks in Hueytown, our kitchen window was lined with ripe tomatoes. Each day we would go out and inspect the vines to see how many tomatoes the birds had left us. The vines were educational as the children learned that tomatoes don't grow in the grocery store. And I couldn't help but think each time I plucked a plump tomato that I was reaping where I had not sown.

The moral of the story is probably rather obvious. It is often true in life that we sow where we personally will not reap. We may never see the end result of all the time and effort we invest in teaching others. We may be completely unaware of the impact of our example and good influence. In view of this, it is important that we do not depend upon such feedback to motivate us in doing what is right.

On the other hand, life occasionally allows us to reap where we did not sow. A situation that comes to maturity and brings joy to us might have been made possible by the previous labor of others.

One final lesson from the lowly tomato: as much as we had missed tomatoes while in London, they began to lose their appeal once we had eaten our fill of them. Things which are off-limits or out of reach often acquire a false attractiveness. How quickly we take for granted those things once craved!