

## Great Grandma's Golden Legacy

My mom was an avid gardener; but at the same time, an unusual one. She seldom knew the correct name of her plants, thought *every* plant needed full sunshine, and haphazardly dug holes for new plants wherever there was a sunny space in her yard.

I too love to garden. I know the names of each plant in the flower bed. My plants were neatly arranged according to both height and light requirements. But when it came to garden yields, my mom had me beat hands down.

When she and I began regular spring visits to the greenhouse, her eyesight was waning.

“This one is called Bugloss, mom. It likes the shade and it's a greenish-silvery colour.”

“Oh, isn't that great!” she would say, “But does it come *back*?”

“Yes. It's perennial.”

This conversation repeated itself each time I picked up a new plant.

Shuffling our way up and down the aisles of plants arranged in alphabetical order, we happened upon the “R's” way in the back. Tables of raspberry vines lay in wait. Picking up an 8” pot, I said,

“This one is a *golden* raspberry plant. Have you ever heard of these?”

She hadn't.

The tag on the plant read,

“Golden raspberry (Rubus) bears sweet, light coloured berries in the summer. Fertilize in early spring. Needs full sun with afternoon shade. Hardy to zone 3.”

“Does it come back?”

“Yes mom. It comes back.”

“Well then,” she squealed, “Let's get a couple! You can plant them in your garden for me. And get one for the baby too.”

The baby was my three-year old granddaughter, Harlow.

Twice over the past few months, family members came home to find Mom lying face down in her garden. She tripped over an errant tree root or an old ceramic pot. She couldn't get up on her own. From then on, Dad forbade her from venturing out to the garden on her own. Since she listened to everything he had to say, garden puttering, for her, became a thing of the past.

I've planted plenty of red raspberry vines in my backyard. I've yet to recreate crops like we had as kids. So, with the golden raspberry, I thought I'd change it up; take a page from my mom's unorthodox gardening handbook. The vines were planted smack-dab in the middle of my front yard

flower garden – completely out of place. But, it was a sunny spot. So I fertilized, watered and set-up a trellis for the vines.

The first year passed. The golden raspberry vines made it through one of our harsh Canadian winters.

The second spring of the golden raspberry rolled around. Again, I fertilized it gently, watered it dutifully, mainly just so I could tell my mom the little plants were still alive.

As spring turned to summer, I noticed a few small, hard, lemon lime developing berries. A few weeks later on a glorious, blue sky day, I was dead-heading some petunias, (unlike my mom, I planted annuals) when I noticed three perfect golden raspberries hanging from the prickly vines. Plucking off the first one, I popped it into my mouth. It was succulent, sweet and tasted like juicy sunshine. I let Harlow pick and eat the other two berries. She was instantly smitten.

That second summer provided a modest harvest. Harlow and I took some berries to my mom. She, too, was smitten at first bite.

“I’m so glad this was all my idea!” she said.

Each year, the golden raspberry plants produced more fruit. The vines spread naturally throughout my front yard flower garden. Yes. . . they look out of place there in the midst of maroon day lilies and white anemone and purple flowering hostas. But, they'd found a place to thrive.

Harlow is now 12 years old. In the summer when she visits, she scampers to the golden

raspberry bushes first, picking any berries that may linger there.

Mom left this world in 2019. But for Harlow and I, when the golden raspberry vines spring to life and grace us with their bountiful harvest, my mom is there with us. Each time we pick the berries, savour the berries. . . as they explode with abundance in our mouths, we remember her with sweet, enduring love.