

Granite

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After almost 5 hours of “gardening” I come to a profound realization -it is not about the height or productivity or size of the plants that you grow, it’s actually about the rocks. All about the rocks. Big ones. Little ones. Round. Small. Brown. Mottled. Heavy. Heavier. Lots and lots of rocks. It’s no wonder that New Hampshire, the Granite State, has acres of abandoned farmland- unlike some of the nearby states... New York, Vermont, even Massachusetts. All of the rocks from those states were moved to NH.

Our one little garden plot is 15 lina-steps across the diagonal. It didn’t seem ambitious when I staked it out, but after the 3rd wheelbarrow full of rocks, NOT including the REALLY big ones that we couldn’t lift by ourselves, I began to feel desperate. What if we just couldn’t garden on this landscape? What if we have to do this every year? All of my plans my garden plans far exceed this small plot of rocky earth- did we choose a poor property for all of my ambitions? What will I do with all of the rock?

I know, I know. That is not the attitude that a new home owner should have, but I tell you, these rocks are like none that you’ve seen. They are not palm sized or the size of your head. They can be the size of an adult’s torso. You can wrap your arms around them. Sit on them like the Thinker.

I survey the enormous stone wall, not far from where we sweat, which was built decades ago. It is easily 5 feet high and 6 feet wide with 2 tiers. It has clean edges and corners which are consistent in dimension for the length of the wall- hundreds of feet. I envision myself tilling this land enough to build such a masterpiece and I suddenly want to give up. As we evolve, humans may have become taller... stronger... smarter... but I am certain that the people who built that wall had more patience and perseverance than I or anyone I know. I wonder if those builders would be glad that someone is once again farming this hostile land, even on such a small scale or would they scoff at my despair.

As we finished tilling the plot, the last corner uncovered the biggest of the rocks. No amount of shoveling or prodding revealed the edge of this behemoth. My Daniel took this as a challenge and as I watch him toil, I fight off delusions of him digging through all the stone in NH all the way to China. “Just cover it up. Just leave it. It doesn’t matter.” (Translation: I don’t know Chinese.) It’s my quitter attitude, perhaps he is made of better stock for this than I.

I look out now on the small plot from the comfort of the house. It pleases me to see a small amount of order in all of the anarchy, but I don’t see the little green spots that are my plants. All I see are the rocks that we couldn’t move any further, sitting defiantly at the edges.

I will be dreaming of the rocks tonight. Rocks and all of the big holes that they leave behind. Every turn of the blades on the rototiller will kick up or hit rocks.