

From the Archives of Demeter's Running

Why name a berry patch in central Pennsylvania, Demeter's Garden?

I was a young girl in the late 1950's, when it was common to think of girls and women as passive and boys and men as active. I fell in love with the mythology of ancient Greece when I was eleven years old. I loved the *active* love of Demeter for her daughter. Zeus was the god of all the gods and when he refused his sisters' demand to have her child returned to her, Demeter acted. For me Demeter stood in dramatic contrast to the gender mythology of the 1950's. Much later I would learn that Demeter was very likely not the sister of Zeus, but a personification of the much older mother goddess whom Zeus had replaced in the religious practice of ancient Greece. She was once as powerful as Zeus and she exercised the power that she maintained in the hearts and minds of ancient Greeks in her love and longing for her child. There was compromise in the myth as well symbolized by the condition Zeus placed on Persephone's return.

For much of human history berries have been free food (notwithstanding the occasional pricks of thorns and sting of pollinating insects). They were gathered in high summer to delight the palate and add needed vitamins and minerals to the diet of both man and animals. Man has been engaged in the cultivation of grain for bread, olives for oil, and grapes for wine for over 5,000 years. Brambles and other berries have been relatively recently cultivated by man rather than gathered from the wild. The natural habitat for brambles and other berries includes the rocky mountain soils of central Pennsylvania.

We hope that should the goddess, Demeter, walk the earth again with her beloved daughter near Potter's Mills, that she will find pleasing the compromises that have produced Demeter's Garden. We compromise daily with my gardener's perspective and Mike's farming perspective, with stony soil, difficult weather, and natural competitors (insects and until recently deer) to gather organic produce from this mountain garden for the delight and nourishment of our neighbors and customers.