

Under the Maple Tree...Somewhere in Oregon

by

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This year my husband and I planted (what we think is) our fifth and final maple tree on our seven acres in Redmond, Oregon. We planted the Princeton Gold, Crimson King, Emerald Queen and October Glory. It would seem as though we had something “royal” going on in our minds, but that was not intentional. We selected the trees purely for fall color.

Our property has a series of fencing and cross fencing of electric wire. Some in part for my husband’s “rotational grazing” plan to keep our small herd of Brahman cattle fertilizing each field, and largely to protect the new maples that went in from being devoured by Windy, Tiny Tot, and Peanut Butter Cup, our pet miniature donkeys. They will eat the shirt off your back if you let them!



Our twin daughters with Windy, Tiny Tot and Peanut Butter Cup.

The maple tree holds a significant place in my heart that started almost 40 years ago at my childhood home in Sweet Home, Oregon. As a young girl, we lived on 13 acres full of trees: a tall stand of old growth fir trees, several fruit trees, many oak trees and one magnificent giant maple tree. She's a beauty! Sweet Home, Oregon, is located at the foothills of the Cascade Mountains and its landscape just beckons for you to "come out and play". My sister and I did a lot of play outside on our property: we spent countless hours in the woods building forts, attempting to ride our donkey, (we would launch ourselves from the rooftop of the pig shed to her bare back only to end up in the blackberry bushes after a rodeo-style 8-second ride), and an all-time favorite of digging for buried treasures. We dug up aged black and red Asian-style dishes, colorful bottles and very old household odds and ends. A tradition that Mom and Dad started as far back as I can remember. Eagerly we knelt on the damp fir needles that lay on the forest floor, both hands tightly grasping the small shovels and turned up the earth all around to see what the Native Americans of years ago had "left behind". Mom had shared with us that this particular spot on our property was an old meeting place for some members of the Kalapuyan Indian Tribe. My sister and I even ran away from home once (to the woods). In the early chilly morning, we packed some clothes in a bag, Trix cereal in an empty metal Band Aid can, and tip-toed out the back door of our ranch-style home. We headed out to the woods confident and laughing about our new-found independence, built a fort and stayed there until we were "good and ready to come home!"...which was...right around...lunchtime.

Just beyond the woods in an opening the grand Maple towers over the other trees, blackberry bushes, ferns, and small animals that scurry about the forest floor. On one occasion I even remember a possum family living in one of our abandoned forts! My dad is an avid hobby photographer and our woods gave him ample photo opportunities.



My sister and I “hugging” a tree to see if our fingers could touch.
(The Maple is in the background.)

Dad would sometimes place us in the trees to get a shot of us kids perched high on the large limbs smiling from ear to ear.



A picture of me at age 13.

As the years passed, we always enjoyed our treks out to the Maple to see how much bigger she had grown since the last visit and just how large her leaves could spread when flattened out.

Now when I return to my parents home with our own daughters, my heart wells up with happy emotion as I delight in watching them dig for buried treasures under that glorious Maple I love so much. They are not digging for treasures that the Native Americans left behind....now they are digging for what children in past years have missed, as my parents continue to share this tradition with other children who live in the neighborhood.



Our twins during a “dig” at G’ma and Papa’s property.

So while our own family tends to the growing maples on our property, my head is full of wonderful dancing memories of past years with the Maple in Sweet Home and happy, hopeful visions of traditions on our own homestead in Redmond. Perhaps someday we will even enjoy grandchildren of our own excitedly exploring around our maples!



Our daughters “hugging” the Maple