

The dangers of monoculture

By [David Williams](#)

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My garden is cranking again this summer, and one of the most remarkable things about a garden is just how much it varies year to year.

You'd think, given how much remains the same, that a garden would be a consistent thing. The light and warmth of this latitude? More or less the same as last year. The drab Virginia clay to which I'm constantly adding mulch and nutrients? It remains identical. The crops? Pretty much last year's planting, meaning bush beans and strawberries, tomatoes and spaghetti squash.

Everything the same, yet the yield so different.

Last year, the beans were a disaster. They barely grew, and what little did come up was brutally butchered by bunnies. [Hasenpfeffer](#) not being an option in my household, I tried to keep them off with netting, which was a complete failure.

Last year the strawberry patch was a booming success, a riot of berries. The tomatoes? They did fine. The squash grew like some alien pod creature, a ferocious tangle of tendrils and huge flowers.

Same plants, same patch of suburban earth, and yet this year is different. The beans exploded in flower, and the bunnies were nowhere to be found. I give the thumbs up to every fox and hawk I see.

The strawberries started well but, despite fine-mesh fencing and netting, our little chipmunk friends had a field day.

The tomatoes are chugging along, but the squash is struggling weakly from the ground.

Life in a garden is like that.

As is life generally. It's one of the reasons that, both personally and in community, it's good to avoid becoming an existential monoculture. If we become so focused on

one way of being, we lose sight of other ways God might be growing us. We can become so fixated on a single part of ourselves that we do not allow other areas of our giftedness to grow. And if a time of drought or blight comes, we will find ourselves with nothing alive at all.

Have our souls become one single crop? Are we allowing ourselves to engage in the breadth of life that nourishes and grows us, and that makes us more robust persons?

Entering into this summer time of transition, it's worth seeking those places. Give them a little light and a little water.

Because having multiple areas of creativity and potential in life is a healthy thing for any soul. And any garden.

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