

The Majestic Apricot Tree

The apricot tree was a majestic old lady well into her 50's with a stump girth of 5ft that branched, at 3ft from the ground, like massive athletes' thighs, into large climbable limbs. Their spread stretched across an area as wide as a garage and as tall as its roof. They were the spring boards of imagination. One day a pirates ship, the next an airplane cockpit, a horse's back, a wild west coach ride, an automobile driver's seat or a magic carpet. In the winter the play would be Cowboys and Indians with bows and arrows made from the winter pruning.

In the spring the delicate white petals with their faint pink blush decorated that apricot tree in a splendor such as would draw a pleasurable gasp from the most unaffected, hardened vagabond. For days they would lace the tree tops and when shaken gently by the breeze, they would float down to bespeckle the ground. It was time to play weddings with bouquets and boutonnieres and confetti.

The blossoms gave way to tiny fruit and as if by the stroke of a wand, tender leaves appeared and clothed the tree in green refinery. Now the majestic apricot tree became the place to hide out. Straddling those mighty boughs with a can of condensed milk nipped from the pantry and a teaspoon to twirl the creamy liquid onto, or a packet of jello to dip a wet forefinger into.

Then the day came when the apricots grew full and ripe in orange glory with rosy cheeks. The biggest, sweetest, apricots you've ever tasted and they never failed in their outstanding flavor and quantity. Year after year after year that grand duchess produced her enormous bounty. The most succulent apricots in the entire world.

Our neighbors came from all directions to fill plastic bags with apricots to eat and make jam but still, many fell to the ground and attracted the flies with their heavy fermenting fruity scent. The concrete area beneath her leafy canopy had to be swept each day to avoid a squishy rotting mess but that was a small price to pay for such a prized apricot tree.

When progress dictated that the apricot tree come down along with the house to make way for a parking lot next to a new shopping center, we arranged with the demolishing construction company to rescue this fine ole gal and replant her in our new garden. To our dismay we found that she clung like crazy to her spot and would need far more sophisticated equipment than we could afford or planned for, to move her without damaging her.

We also found that a water pipe to the house had a tiny leak in it and had been drip feeding her root system for years and that is probably why she had produced those, plumb, tasty, sweet, plentiful apricots for all those years.

It was a sad day saying goodbye to her and watch her being tossed out of her home after she had given so much by way of being a house of imagination, a hiding place and bearer of delicious fruit.

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