



Gardens: Feeding families and enabling culinary traditions

Continued from C2

Alex Tilley learns quite a bit in the garden of his grandmother, Chong Nam Lee: how to pull weeds, to harvest lettuce, to fend off curious squirrels and rabbits. He's picked up a little Korean in the process, too.

"She used to stand outside and chase the rabbits all day with a stick," says Gina Ko, Lee's daughter and Alex's aunt. "The kids learn lots of Korean bad words."

The marauders are after the leafy greens — mint, Italian basil, mugwort, chrysanthemums — closed off by a plastic mesh garden border. Lee described the chrysanthemums as "Korean watercress." She doesn't let them flower, but uses the leaves in salads. (Defending the garden has gotten a tad easier with the addition of a new puppy to the family)

Lee found one plant growing in her River Edge yard that tastes like spinach, so she planted more. She also grows Korean cucumbers, hot peppers, tomatoes, zucchini and Korean radishes. Lee alters her plantings each year, her daughter says. Sometimes it's large amounts of zucchini, sometimes lots of Korean eggplant.

"She has a green thumb," Ko says. "We'd all kill it."

Luckily, the plants survived Lee's recent six-week trip to Korea, from which she returned hauling packets of seeds: red leaf lettuce, chicory and one plant that, judging from the photo on the seed packet, is a cross between a scallion and a leek.

In the 1970s, Lee and her hus-



LESLIE BARBARO/Herald News

Chong Lee gets gardening help from her grandson, Alex Tilley.

The travel time from Lee's garden to her kitchen is mere minutes.

band, Hi Ho Lee, owned a restaurant on 30th Street in Manhattan, an area that later became known as Koreatown. Back then, says Ko, there was just one other Korean restaurant in the area, and the street was fairly quiet. The Lees lived with their four children in an apartment above the restaurant.

In the early 1980s, they moved to New Jersey, but Lee didn't begin gardening until about six years ago. In Korea, she'd grown up with a large garden, where her par-

ents grew watermelons, peaches, apricots and grapes.

Much of Lee's garden is filled with perilla, both green and purple, the latter of which she first planted this year. The Korean name for the plant, *khen-neepe*, translates into "sesame leaf" in English, though it's not closely related to sesame. Lee uses the leaves as wraps for rice and meat.

"They have a clean refreshing taste," she says. "They're so good with meat."

Most of what Lee grows can be bought at Han Ah Reum, a Korean supermarket with a branch in Ridgefield, but after the long trip from California, the produce can look weary. The travel time from Lee's garden to her kitchen, on the other hand, is mere minutes.

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MICHAEL KARAS/Herald News

Jose Velez is joined by his granddaughter Brianna Arredondo in his garden in Paterson.



LESLIE BARBARO/Herald News

Lee returned from a recent six-week visit to Korea with numerous packets of seeds to plant in her garden.

SOLUTION:

4	2	8	9	6	7	1	3	5
3	7	6	8	1	5	2	9	4
1	9	5	4	2	3	6	7	8
2	3	4	1	9	6	8	5	7
5	1	7	2	3	8	4	6	9
6	8	9	5	7	4	3	1	2
9	6	3	7	8	2	5	4	1
8	4	1	6	5	9	7	2	3
7	5	2	3	4	1	9	8	6

Sudoku puzzle on page C4