Attached are two photographs, one of a basil plant I have on my desk, the other of my tomato garden. Since the pandemic started, I've acquired nine plants not including my garden. My garden started with tomatoes, watermelon, jalapenos, and green peppers, but now only the tomatoes survive. When the pandemic got serious in the US, it felt like everything that made me happy came to an abrupt end. Though I'm from Columbus, I lived in a dorm downtown, easily my favorite part of the city. I had to move back to my mom's house across town, leave my roommate who I had just begun to connect with, and just sit back as my first semester at CSU went down the drain. I had just joined a sorority and was making friends, something that did not happen during my first semester in college during fall 2019 when I attended Georgia State in Atlanta. I hated Atlanta, and transferring back home for spring 2020 felt like the best decision I could've made for my mental health. And then it all ended barely three months in. So, my hobby became collecting plants. I'm not known for my green thumb and never have been, so my goal shifted to just keep some plants alive. I stupidly took summer classes despite barely having the self-discipline for online learning, and in July I got a job in food service. Then fall 2020 started, and I started to realize I may have bit off more than I can chew with my writing-heavy classes and job that consistently has me closing at eleven if not later most nights. It's difficult to see my work paying off, in both areas of my life. I'm currently six weeks into the semester and feel like I've done nothing while simultaneously working nonstop when not at my job, and when I'm at work it's a monotonous cycle of ringing people up, handing food out, and being fussed at by customers because its football season and they don't want to wait for their wings. And I do also acknowledge that I'm lucky, in that while I've had family contract COVID, no one I know has passed from it. I didn't lose my home, and I'm still able to talk to my friends. I was lucky to find work during a pandemic when so many lost their jobs. But it still feels like I've been stuck in a rut since March, especially since this time last year I was in such a terrible mental state, and I did what I needed to get myself better only to have that taken away because of the pandemic. But I can say that nursing my plants has been the highlight of this whole thing. For the first time in my life, I kept something alive! And not just one something, but nine whole plants. Though I did lose everything else in the garden, my tomatoes prevailed, and I think that's something to be proud of! I have seven plants on my desk, and of course I gave them all names. I water and fertilize them of course, and I talk to them because I read that that's a good thing to do. And while eight of my plants are succulents, flowers, or exotic angel plants, I do also have basil, and there's something so special about being able to harvest your own food. Being able to use tomatoes and basil that I grew myself is one of my favorite things. Though so simple, it's a nice little accomplishment to say that I was able to grow (some) my own food. Of all the productive things I can say I'm proud of during this time, growing my own plants takes the cake. I'm not sure why I'm so proud of this little pandemic project. Maybe it's the fact that I finally kept a plant alive after nineteen years of trying and consistently failing. Maybe it's that I've proven to myself that when I get my own home in the future, I know I'll be able to maintain a garden and save money on grocery shopping. Or maybe it's just that with seven plants on my desk alone and some flowers throughout the house, at the end of the day I've made my home a prettier place to be. No matter the reason that this project is so special to me, I think it's nice that I've grown something beautiful out of this time of turmoil. Times are confusing and scary, but my plants are a nice little reminder that things can still grow and thrive if you just put in the work, even amidst chaos.


Basil

Tomato garden