



Gardening with God

Reclaiming the simple joy of growing food & flowers

Why Garden?

Why?

Because baby carrots don't exist in real life...carrots pulled from dirt, all shapes and colors, wiped down and eaten that day are real and taste better.

Because flowers, strategically planted, will bring to your garden both color and life as bees, birds and butterflies come to visit.

Because there is something miraculous that happens when a tiny seed planted in dirt becomes a salad, or a towering sunflower.

Because our kids need to learn that food comes from dirt, hard work, sun and rain...not the grocery store.

Because in the Story of God, it is part of our calling.***

In this booklet, we will seek to give you both ideas to do and biblical teaching to ponder.

Happy Gardening!

For a more detailed, 'grown -up' theological reflection around this, please read the essay at the back of this booklet.



“To cultivate a garden is to walk with God, to go hand in hand with nature in some of her most beautiful processes, to learn something of her choicest secrets, and to have a more intelligent interest awakened in the beautiful order of her works elsewhere.”
- Christian Nestell Bovee

Getting Started!

How to get started!

To get started, let's go through the 4 W's and 1 H questions. This is a great part to get your kids involved in the planning!

Where:

Where do you have room to grow? A garden space, pots on a deck, a window sill or in someone else's yard.

What:

Once you decide where, now comes the fun part...what are you going to grow? The follow-

ing pages have some fun ideas. Grab a piece of paper and make a list!

Why:

Why are you growing what you are growing? Do you want a garden that feeds your family? Make sure you plant what you like to eat. Do you want birds to enjoy your garden? Find out what grows best in your yard.

When:

Spring is here. It is time to start preparing your garden space,

either by cleaning up or building garden boxes. Some crops can even be started now.

How:

Gardening is a bit of luck, a bit of planning and lots of hard work. Talk to people who have done this before. If you need to build garden boxes, get your supplies. Check Craigslist for used pots and gardening tools. Check the church bulletins for tips and gatherings to share knowledge

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Growing a Kid Friendly Garden

Most kids love dirt, but more importantly, most kids love spending time with their parents. Growing a garden incorporates both! It is fun to sit down with your child and plan a garden. Get a seed catalogue, look into your fridge or go to a local nursery and look at seeds and discuss what your child likes to eat.

Fun things to grow for Kids

Carrots – try some new varieties.

This year we are growing purple striped carrots! Plus they are fun to pull out of the ground.

Strawberry plants are fun and can grow in pots.

Potatoes, if you have room. It's like a treasure hunt to harvest.

Beans – either bush or runners up a trellis

Snow peas – a tasty snack right off the vine

Berries – fun, but may not provide a harvest your first year

Sunflowers – Grow giants or ones you can eat.

Pumpkins – need lots of room, but growing your own jack o lantern is cool.



*Take chances! Make mistakes!
Get Messy!*

~Ms Frizzle, Magic School Bus

Pot Gardens...the good kind!

If you don't have land of your own to grow, don't worry! Pots are a great way to grow both food and flowers. Make sure you have some sun to help your crop grow.

Here are some suggestions for your pots:

Herbs:

Basil, Cilantro, Mint

Rosemary, Thyme & Oregano

Strawberries

Carrots

Potatoes

Tomatoes

Salads

Bush beans

Bush cucumbers

Garlic

Onions

Almost any kind of flower bulb or annuals can grow in

containers.

Another trick to maximize your space is to grow UP! Plant cucumbers, zucchini, pumpkins or runner beans in a container and train them up a trellis on the wall.

Remember to provide drain holes in your containers, good mix of soil and the right crop for your space and light.



An excellent book to use is:

Crops in pots

By Bob Purnell

****Available at the Ladner library****



Creating a garden for the birds and the bees.

Flowers in all shapes and sizes are fun to have in a garden. There are some flowers that will attract hummingbirds, bees, bugs and butterflies. Here are some suggestions to make your garden the place to be!



Flowers:
Petunia
Fuchsias
Honeysuckle
Purple coneflower
Asters
Butterfly Bush
Morning Glory
Scarlet Runner Bean
Quince
Azaleas

Another way to attract those beautiful humming birds is to get a humming bird feeder. Make a solution of 1 part sugar to 4 parts water. Add red food coloring for fun!

Remember, some bugs are good to have in your garden... like ladybugs

Sunflowers!



Sunflowers are easy to grow as long as they have the proper conditions...mainly the Sun! There are hundreds of different types, so make sure that if you want to eat the seeds to get the right kind. Sunflowers come in all shapes, colors and sizes...have fun!

You can begin to harvest sunflower seeds as soon as the center flowers turn brown or the backs of the heads turn yellow, to prevent birds from stealing them. Cut them, leaving a piece of stem to hang them in a well ventilated place to finish drying. Cover them with netting, paper sacks with holes or cheesecloth to catch falling seeds as they dry. They can be allowed to dry on the stalk, but you'll have to cover them this way to keep the birds from eating them all before you can harvest them for yourself!

If you've grown sunflowers for the purpose of feeding birds, you can either leave them in the ground, or harvest the heads as above, then hang them in the yard or garden when they are ready. This method has an advantage in that you can dole out the heads over the winter, instead of seeing the seed all eaten within a few weeks. Harvest them for other animals (hamsters, rats and so forth) using the same method.

When the seeds can be rubbed easily from the head, it's dry and the seeds are ready to be roasted for eating. First, remove them from the heads and pick out any pieces of stem or other debris.

Mix a quarter of a cup or so of plain salt to a quart of water, and soak the seeds in this overnight. Spread them on cookie sheets and roast in a very slow oven (150 to 200 degrees) until completely dry. Stir them once or twice during the drying time; this will take three or four hours. If you intend to store them for any length of time, put them in jars while still warm and close tightly. They keep very well in a cool dark place. Variations call for mixing a teaspoon of melted butter with a cup of seeds while they are still warm from the oven, (these are for immediate eating) or roasting them until they are browned instead of just dry.

Building your own raised garden bed

Building your very own raised vegetable or flower bed

Supplies:

- 4 – 2 x 6 boards @ 8 feet long. (Pine or cedar are good choices. Don't use pressure treated lumber.)
- 4 – 2 x 6 boards @ 4 feet long.
- 1# 3 – 3 1/2 exterior screws
- 1# 2 – 2 1/2 exterior screws
- 1 bundle 18" – 24" stakes

Tools:

- Tape measure
- Pencil
- Level
- Small sledge hammer
- Carpenter's square
- Cordless drill
- 7/64 #8 counter sink bit

Basic instructions:

Set the first side, attach ends with large screws. Attach ends on second side with large screws.

Square and level first side. Drive stakes in corners. Attach stakes to boards with small screws.

Square and level second side. Drive stakes in corners. Attach stakes to boards with small screws.

Make sure the whole thing is level

Drive more stakes all along the inside of the box, leaving about 4 inches of stake sticking above the board.

Attach stakes to boards with small screws.

Attach upper layer of boards to themselves as you did on the bottom layer, then attach boards to stakes.

You can either dig up the ground under your box or lay down a thick layer of newspaper or landscape cloth to reduce weeds growing into your box.

That's it!

You can do it!



Now just picture your
garden growing!

For some tips on the best way to
use this box,

check out square foot gardening at :

www.squarefootgardening.com

(Please ignore the blatant sales pitch on the site. Go get a mix of landfill compost and topsoil, and you'll be good!)

Seeds for thoughts- - - some simple teachings for kids

Gardening is a great way to introduce the topic of faith. From the creation story, to the power of a small seed, God is present. Let us open our eyes to Him. The following are not extensive bible studies, but rather Scriptures and wondering questions that begin a conversation and perhaps, a journey.

Seeds and Faith – Story of the Mustard Seed. Use seeds that you have to tell the story while planting. Some ideas: Take several different kinds of seeds and full grown examples, ie: carrot seed and a real carrot. Talk about how seeds grow into these different kinds of shapes and sizes. Incorporate the biblical story of how faith can grow like a seed.

- Can you imagine this seed as a full grown veggie/flower? If you could make a seed, what would it grow?

Bits ‘n’ Pieces

There is so much more to be said, but here are some additional resources that you might find helpful. Please watch for “Gardening with God” inserts in the bulletins for tips and events!

Books for Kids:

The Trellis & the Seed, Jan Karon

God Speaks to us in Feeding Stories, Mary Ann Gett-Sullivan.

Ready, Set, Grow, Suzanne Frutig Bales

Stone Soup - Any version of this folk tale

Loaves of Fun (cookbook) Elizabeth Harbison.

Books for Adults (theology, poetry)

Like a Garden, Sara Covin.

Seeds and You – Use seeds to demonstrate how we all grow differently. How a big seed can grow something little and a little seed something big. Or how the same carrot seed can sometimes grow a big crooked carrot or a straight little one. Explore how each living thing is created just a little bit unique, just like you and me.

- You and I are from the same seed/family. How are we the same? How are we different? How do you think God came up with all the different kinds of flowers/veggies?

Seeds and Life and Death - John 12:24. Talk about how a seed actually dies to grow. It may be a good conversation to talk about any recent births or deaths in your family. This can help

Absolute Trust in the Goodness of the Earth, Alice Walker

Books on Food & Gardening

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle, Barbara Kingsolver

Crops in Pots, Bob Purnell

Food Matters, Mark Bittman

Websites:

Westcoast Seeds:
www.westcoastseeds.com

Square Foot Gardening:
www.squarefootgardening.com

Arocha—Christians in Conservation

<http://www.arocha.org/ca-en/index.html>

kids not be afraid of death; in the Christian story, death always comes before life.

A garden and responsibility – Genesis story of creation and the garden; the idea of taking care of a garden and the responsibility of watering and weeding. This conversation could lead/build on conversations around having a pet or new freedom in life such as a later bedtime.

- It is a big responsibility to take care of a garden. What would happen if we just left the garden?

We want to make this a community building event so...

- *If you have land to share or are looking for land to grow on...*
- *If you have tools or pots you no longer need...*
- *Experience in growing flowers and veggies that you want to share...*
- *You are an expert at canning or want to learn...*
- *Have too many seeds, bulbs or plants and want to share...*

We want to hear from you!
Please contact Nadia at
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Adult Reflection

We find ourselves in a time where food production is once again a topic on many people's mind. We are consistently being encouraged to choose food that is local – within 100 Miles. Perhaps this is why more and more people are interested in gardening and growing some of their own food. People passionate about gardens are popping up in our churches, on our streets and in the market place. Does the Church, with her understanding of the world and grounded in the Story of God, have anything significant to offer this growing interest among people today? Absolutely! As you will see Christians can be on the leading edge of planting community gardens because of the theological implications found in the gardens we read about in the Bible.

If you were asked to think about the gardens in the Bible two very significant gardens would most likely come to mind, Eden and Gethsemane. At the very beginning of our story we have God planting a garden (Gen2:4). Eden is the archetypal garden that overflows with diversity. This garden reappears in the book of Revelation where we read about the plants themselves serving to heal the brokenness of life (Rev 22:3). Gethsemane, that garden of darkness, isolation and wrestling, lies between these other gardens at the very crux of our Story.

If we back up and look at these three gardens as part of one Story, the essential message of the Bible takes on a clearer focus. We see God planting a garden where diversity, plenty and participation are at the core of what was created. This idyllic picture did not last long reminding us that we are merely *adamah* (earth) unable to live into the garden without some sense of struggle as the stewards we were created to be. Our Story continues, with its ever repeating cycle of highs and lows detailed through much of the first testament, and brings us to that dark and lonely garden of Gethsemane. Jesus faces death, surprises us with new life and we hear John make sense of it this way: I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels--a plentiful harvest of new lives (John 12:24). How does this death move us toward our garden of a renewed creation in Revelation? When Jesus returned to the Father, the bounty of God's Spirit planted in the hearts of attentive people, and poured out upon unsuspecting others during Pentecost, invited all to share in the work of God who creates all things in heaven and on earth.

When we get our hands dirty with gardening we enact the Story of God as a symbol of the basic movement in our story – the movement toward redemption and the renewal of all things. Each seed we plant must die and we trust that new life will burst forth providing nourishment to many. If we allow it - this act of gardening can compel us to ask: Where is life bursting in my own life? Gardening is not only a symbol of the Story but a radical (rooted) participation in the practical renewal of all things – we participate with God in working alongside God to see that renewal take place. Building gardens where concrete or other lifeless forms once were does indeed bring a greater sense of vitality and diversity to that patch of land.

Is it presumptuous to say that we are gardening *with* God? Does it sound too familiar? Especially when many are concerned we have lost sight of the grandeur of God? Our gardens help us to understand this is in fact the very way we are to garden. In order to be helped by the garden we need to remember that the original audience was a group of slaves, recently freed in a dramatic contest between Moses and Pharaoh. It was to this group of slaves that Moses communicated the creation story. If you have done a little study on creation you will know that most cultures have their own creation narrative and the former slaves had been living in (and working) in a context that had a creation narrative as well. Their creation narrative indicated that humanity was created for the sole purpose of working for the gods so the gods could be freed of their drudgery in order to rest. Humanity, in this story is slave to the gods. The Judeo-Christian creation story, on the other hand, creates Adam from the *adamah* and yes, gives him a job to do in naming all the animals. Then the story shifts dramatically as Adam is invited to participate with God in God's divine rest. Work and rest is well balanced in the creation story and the cycles of gardening help to remind us of that work/rest balance that is a required part of our very identity as humans.

What is the end, the goal of all this biblical gardening? If we begin with the Bible's emphasis that the land and the earth are divine gifts and the source of our very existence then we can know that all of life is sustained by what has been created. A very necessary corrective we need to pay heed to. Several sacred texts also show us the significance of gardening is to make provision, not only for ourselves, but for those who do not have access to the land (Deut 15:11; Leviticus 19:33), and for our children's children in the future (1 Chronicles 28:8). The earth has to be treated gently as part of God's covenant with humanity and the rest of life (Genesis 9). It should not be taken for granted, desecrated or polluted.

These texts lead us to believe that developing community gardens on church property fit into this gardening impulse we find in the Story of God. If we allow that Story to shape us we will make space for our neighbours and those with no access to land to help in the process of restoring our creation. Paul Abell stewardship coordinator for A Rocha in Toronto says that "Planting a garden is a great opportunity for a church to become engaged in the broader community. People love to see things grow. They drop by [a community garden] and feel very emotionally and spiritually uplifted. I've been involved in a lot of different things in church, but I don't think I have ever seen anything as good at connecting a church with its neighbours."

Happy Gardening!

~Written by Rod Olson~