

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

“LESSONS FROM THE GARDEN”

SPRING comes...finally...without fail. Just spend an afternoon in a backyard garden watching the life there, and you will see an amazing abundance. Notice the little things, a weed leaning toward a crack of sunlight, a pair of doves taking turns at the feeder, rainwater caught in the fold of a leaf. Tiny miracles all. Gardening books and articles give us ideas to create and improve our natural spaces, but seldom are we encouraged to reflect on the hidden life lessons that are found metaphorically in the everyday garden. Here are just a few.



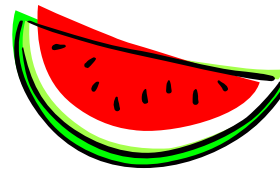
ever brief, and that each one has a purpose, if only to be food for another. In the web of human relations we never know what impact the tiniest act might have on others. We don't always see the ripples. A natural gardener needs to keep an open mind and not be quick to judge.

Sitting in the garden we learn to respect others, no matter their social status, as being an important thread in the larger social fabric.

COMPETITION: One thing gardeners know is that living things will compete for resources and that some living

BEING CREATIVE:

Flower gardening begins with inspiration. The gardener envisions his or her natural space in much the same way an artist imagines a canvas. Whether they are looking at the whole yard or just a corner, gardeners seek to create beauty using the earth's natural bounty. As with any act of creating, especially utilizing nature, gardening can engender a sense of joining with the universal forces of creation. Sitting in the garden we know in our bones that the natural world, the wonder and the mystery, is an ever flowing stream, reliable and true. And when we immerse ourselves in that abundance we can begin to feel a grand design and our own place in it.



GETTING TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS

One of the most essential things a gardener has to do is become acquainted with the critters that naturally inhabit the territory, the birds, bugs, weeds and wildflowers. We do in our gardens what we do with friends and family. We discover how the players behave, who needs what, and how we want to respond. It may take a few years of observation, but eventually patterns begin to emerge. Inviting more birds may mean growing some berries or adding a water source. Some weeds that fill in bare spots may have pretty blooms that can be incorporated into the landscape rather than simply being yanked. When we watch closely we see that even the smallest of creatures has an interesting life, how-

THINGS TO PONDER...

- ◆ *Being Creative*
- ◆ *Getting to know your neighbors*
- ◆ *Competition*
- ◆ *Boundaries*
- ◆ *Getting to the root of the matter*
- ◆ *Hope*
- ◆ *Acceptance*
- ◆ *Going a little wild*
- ◆ *Patience and Faith*

BOUNDARIES

change the environment to discourage further growth by doing such things as planting other hardy species that will dig in roots and not be easily taken over, planting to create more shade, or pruning to make way for more sunlight. In other words, diversity and flexibility are necessary to sustain a vibrant living whole. There is enough to go around if distributed fairly. We humans can learn to live in harmony with each other, without violence or destruction, and for the benefit of all.



BOUNDARIES: Some gardeners are very strict about what can grow where, while others are a little more liberal. One person's weed is another person's wildflower. But, unless you want a jungle you will likely have to decide at some point what to pull, what to mow down, and what to leave alone. A garden, like life, is an ever-evolving creation. When something grows out of place or too big the gardener must act to pluck or to prune out excess. This is true of our lives as well. Some things we enjoy and commit to at one time in our lives may not serve us as well in another. Learning to say no to what we don't want or need, cleaning out our excess, simplifies our lives and makes new growth possible.

GETTING TO THE ROOT OF THE MATTER: Gardeners know that if you want to transplant or get rid of a plant or weeds you must dig down to the roots and pull them out. Otherwise they are likely to keep growing back and disrupting things. It is the same with emotions. When we bury our painful feelings such as sadness, anger, resentment, they don't go away. Rather they stay deep inside sapping our energy and tainting how we view the world. Like the plants, we need to dig down to the root of the

HOPE

feelings, the original hurts, in order to heal them and stop them from hurting us more.

HOPE: Another fascinating lesson about roots is that some plants can grow new ones when the original ones are severed. All they need is the right medium. Sometimes just the end of a leaf or bare stem can be placed in a jar of water and within days, new roots begin to form. The lesson for us is that even when we are devastated by fundamental loss, be it a loved one, a job, a home, a marriage, it is still possible to grow new, strong roots that will continue to sustain us. In the face of great loss there is hope.

ACCEPTANCE: Gardening reminds us that life's unpredictability is as much a natural fact as it's predictability. The sun rises and sets every day, but we are never quite sure where those pesky weeds will pop up or how many blooms the peonies will yield. Despite all our efforts and calculations, we sometimes get more than we expected and sometimes less. We learn that we can only have minimal control and that forces other than our own are always at play. In the end we have to go with the flow of what is and make the best of it.

"CLEANING OUT OUR EXCESS, SIMPLIFIES OUR LIVES AND MAKES NEW GROWTH POSSIBLE"



PATIENCE AND FAITH

GOING A LITTLE WILD:

Many gardeners find that some corners or out of the way space in their yards are just best left alone. Tall grasses mix with ferns and runaway phlox. It could be neater, it could be thinned, it could be transplanted. But there is something primally appealing about leaving a little wildness, some unrestricted place that reminds us to lighten up, that gives us permission to kick back sometimes and just be our natural, un-kempt, wonderfully fertile selves.

PATIENCE AND FAITH:

A gardener has to be patient. Nature has it's own rhythm. It is not up to us when the blooms will open. We plant and nurture and tend, but ultimately we must wait. Time, soil, sunlight and something else, something unknowable, do the rest. In the end we must surrender to them all. And with our surrender we develop faith. Though we don't know exactly when or where, we are sure that something magical, something wondrous, will always happen in the garden.

This summer as you enjoy the fruits of the earth, remind yourself that your life is also a wonderful bouquet. Your wisdom and experience, carefully tended, pruned and shaped, will yield your own uniquely bountiful, beautiful harvest!

Inside Story Headline



Caption describing picture or graphic.

Inside Story Headline

“To catch the reader's attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here.”

Inside Story Headline

This story can fit 75-125 words.

Selecting pictures or graphics is an important part of adding content to your newsletter.

Think about your article and ask yourself if the picture supports or enhances the message you're trying to convey. Avoid selecting images that appear to be out of context.

Microsoft Publisher includes thou-

sands of clip art images from which you can choose and import into your newsletter. There are also several tools you can use to draw shapes and symbols.

Once you have chosen an image, place it close to the article. Be sure to place the caption of the



Caption describing picture or graphic.

image near the image.

COUNSELING SERVICE

Primary Business Address

Your Address Line 2
Your Address Line 3
Your Address Line 4

Phone: 518-465-8728

Fax: 518-436-3576

Email: PMinucci@hotmail.com



Your business tag line
here.



This would be a good place to insert a short paragraph about your organization. It might include the purpose of the organization, its mission, founding date, and a brief history. You could also include a brief list of the types of products, services, or programs your organization offers, the geographic area covered (for example, western U.S. or European markets), and a profile of the types of customers or members served.

It would also be useful to include a contact name for readers who want more information about the organization.

Back Page Story Headline

This story can fit 175-225 words.

If your newsletter is folded and mailed, this story will appear on the back. So, it's a good idea to make it easy to read at a glance.

A question and answer session is a good way to quickly capture the attention of readers. You can either compile questions that you've received since the last edition or you can summarize some generic questions that are frequently asked about your organization.

A listing of names

and titles of managers in your organization is a good way to give your newsletter a personal touch. If your organization is small, you may want to list the names of all employees.

If you have any prices of standard products or services, you can include a listing of those here. You may want to refer your readers to any other forms of communication that you've created for your organization.

You can also use this space to remind readers to

mark their calendars for a regular event, such as a breakfast meeting for vendors every third Tuesday of the month, or a biannual charity auction.

If space is available, this is a good place to insert a clip art image or some other graphic.



Caption describing picture or graphic.