

Gardening Lessons – March 1994
By J.S., CA

As springtime approaches, we start to think of getting ready for planting a garden. While the frost still covers the ground we plan what we will plant, where, how much, etc. We map out our plan on paper to make the best use of space, sunlight needs for each plant, and convenience to the kitchen. As we look through the seed catalogs with our children, we enjoy discovering all the many wonderful varieties available. The amazing colors, shapes, and sizes of all the fruits, vegetables and flowers remind us of God's handiwork and give us a hint of how lovely the new earth will be.

We like to share our love of gardening with our children and encourage them to participate with it. In *Education*, p. 111, Ellen White wrote,

"As parents and teachers try to teach these lessons, the work should be made practical. Let the children themselves prepare the soil and sow the seed. As they work, the parent or teacher can explain the garden of the heart, with the good or bad seed sown there, and that as the garden must be prepared for the natural seed, so the heart must be prepared for the seed of truth. As the seed is cast into the ground, they can teach the lesson of Christ's death; and as the blade springs up, the truth of the resurrection. As the plant grows, the correspondence between the natural and the spiritual sowing may be continued.

The youth should be instructed in a similar way. From the tilling of the soil, lessons may constantly be learned. No one settles upon a raw piece of land with the expectation that it will at once yield a harvest. Diligent, persevering labor must be put forth in the preparation of the soil, the sowing of the seed, and the culture of the crop. So it must be in the spiritual sowing. The garden of the heart must be cultivated. The soil must be broken up by repentance. The evil growths that choke the good grain must be uprooted. As soil once overgrown with thorns can be overcome only by earnest effort in the name and strength of Christ."

One way we have found it easy and practical for our children to care for their gardens is to use either grow boxes constructed of scavenged lumber, or old tires lined with chicken wire to discourage gophers. We compost everything from animal manure, leaves, kitchen scraps, etc. We have found that we can virtually dispense with any commercial fertilizers by using compost. We also utilize "companion planting" such as garlic, onions and marigolds with tomatoes or squash, and crop rotation solves any pest problems.

We enjoy experimenting with different flowers in our gardens. Each year it seems our flowers are larger and more abundant. While most of the time we prefer to leave them in their garden space to look at as we go about our

work, at times we bring them in to set in vases for fragrant decoration, or share them with friends, or incorporate them in some craft hobby. **"In this book of nature, opened to us in the beautiful, scented flowers, with their varied and delicate coloring, God gives to us an unmistakable expression of His love. After the transgression of Adam, God might have destroyed every opening bud and blooming flower, or He might have taken away their fragrance, so grateful to the senses. In the earth, seared and marred by the curse, in the briars, the thistles, the thorns, the tares, we may read the law of condemnation; but in the delicate color and perfume of the flowers, we may learn that God still loves us, that His mercy is not wholly withdrawn from the earth."**
Selected Messages, book 1, p. 291.

Gardening has been a simple pleasure for us all, it has been a pleasurable outdoor exercise, a means of providing inexpensive and tasty food for our family and for others, a time of quiet contemplation on the Master Artist who has created all.

--

©The Adventist Home Educator, www.adventisthomeducator.org