

HOW GARDENS GROW ROOTS,
CONNECTION, WHOLENESS, AND HOPE



SEEDTIME

and

HARVEST



CHRISTIE PURIFOY
AUTHOR OF GARDEN MAKER



SEEDTIME


 *and* 

HARVEST

CHRISTIE
PURIFOY



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS
EUGENE, OREGON



*While the earth remains, seedtime and
harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter,
day and night, shall not cease.*

GENESIS 8:22 ESV





CONTENTS



Introduction: Everything Is Reconciled in a Garden 9

Part One: Gardens Grow Roots

The Ghost in My Garden 23

 ★ Heirloom Roses for Dorothy 29

Gardens Visible and Invisible 31

How to Change the World in Three Easy Steps 37

 ★ Special Shade Plants to Inspire the Planting of Trees 43

Roots and Wind 45

 ★ Favorite Ornamental Grasses 52

The Spirit of a Place 55

 ★ How to Make New Plants in Water 61

Part Two: Gardens Grow Connection

A Harvest for the Birds 65

Creepy, Crawly Wonders 71

 ★ Butterfly and Plant Pairs 77

Raining Dogs and Cats and Chickens 79

 ★ Chickens in the Garden 85

Making Friends with the Neighbors 87

 ★ Ornamental Food 93

Sharing the Garden 95

 ★ Plants the Deer Do Not Care to Share 101

Part Three: Gardens Grow Wholeness

A Hodgepodge and a Mishmash	105
★ A Tea Garden	111
Native Plants and Kindness	113
★ Seedheads to Savor	119
Controlling the Uncontrollable Vine	121
★ Well-Behaved Vines and Climbers	127
A Layered Garden	131
★ Ground-Huggers	139
Whole Gardens for Whole Gardeners	143

Part Four: Gardens Grow Hope

The Art of Wildness	151
★ Fully Alive Lawns	157
The Generous Garden	159
★ Planting for the Future	164
Choose Your Own Adventure	167
★ Ground Cherry Jam	174
Hope Is Brown Then Green	177
★ A Year in Bulbs	183
Hope Is Green Then Red	185
Epilogue: Hope in an Age of Climate Chaos	191





INTRODUCTION

Everything Is Reconciled in a Garden



Between the first deep freeze of fall and the last deep freeze of spring, while the ground beneath my feet cycles between stone hard and mud melt, I walk the same route through my neighborhood nearly every day. During the growing season, I am too busy tending my garden to walk. Occasionally, I wander the same path late on a summer evening, but only when I am frustrated with my garden and looking for escape. It is January in Pennsylvania as I write these words. I walked my familiar winter route today, a path that carries me over sidewalks, along a public golf course, and behind many of the houses built ten years ago on the farmland that originally gave my old farmhouse its purpose. Behind one of these houses, I am always cheered to see a small raised-bed garden. Because I mostly walk this way in winter, I have never been sure if the garden is still cultivated. Today, it was covered in dead plant material—weeds or vegetables, I could not say—along with a few rusty tomato cages. Somehow the sight of it always pleases me more than the neat but sterile landscapes of the homes nearby. These

*Gardening teaches us that we belong to nature
and are also responsible for it. Human culture and
nature's destiny are inextricably intertwined.*

VIGEN GUROIAN, *INHERITING PARADISE*

tumble-down raised beds tell me that someone has been involved with this place beyond the minimum we expect of a homeowner. Someone wanted more than lawn grass and shrubs.

A longing for Eden—for paradise—is buried deep in every human heart. Some are more aware of *paradise lost* than others. For these, the weedy and overgrown vegetable beds in a corner of the backyard are not the sign of failure they first appear to be. Rather, they suggest that someone has listened to her heart. Someone has sought a good and right connection with the natural world. Others may be less aware that anything of importance is missing from their lives. Convinced they were born with black thumbs, they ignore the houseplants for sale at the supermarket. They pursue only those hobbies far removed from green, growing life. They are content with a landscape that fulfills the minimum requirements of their homeowners' association bylaws. However, gardening is something much more than home maintenance. Gardening is no mere hobby. It is not a pastime intended only to help us "pass the time." Gardening is a way of life, and as a way of life, it can cure so much that ails us.

After all, our world is on intimate terms with estrangement. We can each tell stories of fractured friendships, neighborly disputes, even nations at war. Endangered species lists, "save the Amazon" campaigns, and even that new parking lot where a meadow once grew remind us of the enmity that seems to taint our human relationships with the natural world. If we have dared to plant a seed or pull a weed, we can tell tales of droughts and heat waves and failure. But with so much around us out of tune, we gardeners also testify to regular wonders. Our cups runneth over with zinnias and zucchini every July. We are maybe just a little bit tired of sweet, sun-warmed tomatoes by September. It is true that when we garden, we are *more* aware of the broken things. Tomatoes are meant to turn a glorious red, but sometimes high heat keeps them stubbornly green. Drought is often par for the course in August, but surely not in May?





Yet despite the crack that does indeed seem to run through everything, we see firsthand in the garden how winter gives way to spring, decay feeds the green of new life, and every last seed, insect, butterfly, and bird is connected. To one another. And to us.

When sounds are unreconciled and disconnected, the result is cacophony and noise. When sounds are put in right relationship to one another, the result is music. In a world out of tune, gardeners cultivate harmony. The wonder is that there are almost infinite possibilities for harmony, whether we are speaking about the art of music or the art of gardening. There is no single way to reconcile soil with seed with sunlight. When we set out to cultivate the music of life, the song is always new, always changing, always surprising, always good. Life cannot be static, or it ceases to be life. Life is growth. And what are we growing in a garden? Whether the tangible fruit is a tomato or a rosebud, in a garden, we are growing roots. We are growing connection. We are growing wholeness. And we are growing hope.

I sometimes think I was born rootless. While others around me seemed to thrive in the heat and humidity and cowboy culture of central Texas, I usually felt like an observer rather than a participant (though an orchard of pecan trees will always make my heart sing). Today I suspect that my sensitive temperament only made me aware at a young age of something that is true for each one of us: we are never born with roots—we grow them. It may be that we receive the work of previous generations. Perhaps our great-grandparents and grandparents and parents cultivated places and cultures within which we can, in time, feel as rooted as they. But perhaps not. Perhaps like me, you leave the home of your birth, either by choice or by necessity, and must figure out how to belong and where. At its core, gardening is not about the roses or dahlias or tomatoes we might grow. At its core, gardening is an intimate, ongoing relationship with a place. And it is this relationship that roots us as firmly as a tree is rooted in the ground.

We have always understood trees as rooted, but we have mistaken them as solitary in their rootedness. In recent years, scientists have discovered that a forest is less like a collection of individual trees and more like a single organism connected underground by its roots. Even sick or injured or dying trees with no leaves for photosynthesis can be kept alive through the roots they share with other trees. A tree that is fully and completely rooted is also a tree that is fully connected. Rootedness and connectedness are one and the same. I began to garden because I like to eat good food, and I wanted flavors that could not be found in supermarkets. But my pursuit of good food led me, eventually, to flowers. And through the flowers, I began to feel connected to the pollinators who feasted on them, the butterflies who danced on them, and the birds who couldn't seem to stay away. My relationship with a particular place has become a connection to the various and abundant life of this place—and life is so much more than a few fresh flavors on our dinner plate.

The buzz and hum of garden life can be noisy in a way. I am never not startled by the chattering and quarreling of squirrels in the old walnut tree that towers over our black-painted barn. And every year I forget how loud our chickens are at sunrise until that first autumn cool front arrives, and I once again sleep with the window beside my bed left open. When I write of the music of the garden, I do not mean that its sounds never grate on my ear. Rather, these sounds—whether from my dog barking at the neighbor's dog or from the children who live next door shouting and squealing while they pick the wild wineberries that grow along our fence line—somehow add up to a wholeness that is pulsing with life. This is not the peace of “peace and quiet.” This is the peace of *shalom*, that ancient Hebrew word that means peace, harmony, and *wholeness*. We are fragmented people in a fragmented world, but we do not feel made for fragmentation. No matter the form of our religion, no matter the shape of our spiritual lives, we long for a mode of being and





relating in which the puzzle pieces fit, in which the picture—whatever exactly it depicts—is beautiful.

I have often shocked my garden visitors by declaring that my garden is not my happy place. Though my intention in this book is to recruit more of you to the ranks of gardeners, I make that task harder by admitting that my garden often feels like a battleground. It isn't so much that I do battle with pests and weeds. I am learning more and more to fight that fight through surrender. I cover my soil instead of disrupting it, because every tug is a signal to some weed seed to wake up. I no longer do direct battle with pests; instead, I choose to grow different plants or I try to entice natural predators. It is a sly, sideways form of war. The true battle being waged in my garden is internal, inside of *me*. It is the battle I wage because of what gardening calls out within me: anxiety and peace, fear and hope, wonder and despair. I am tugged between my longing for beauty and the reality of a disease-ridden flower. I am filled with joy by the freshness of spring only to feel it wither in the oppressive heat of summer. In the garden, all my internal monsters are awakened, and I must learn how to defeat them or soothe them or transform them. If I spend one hour pulling weeds, often I emerge more changed than my garden.

Both garden and gardener are constantly shifting. In a garden, after all, nothing stays the same, not even for a day. At first glance, the inexorable patterns of nature might seem oppressive. Thousands of years ago, a wise one wrote that “the sun rises and the sun sets. . . . What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:5, 9). If there is indeed nothing new under the sun, then the pressure is off, isn't it? If our life is really only “breath,” as the same writer claims, then let us drop our inflated sense of importance—that view of ourselves that says we must conquer the world and change the world—and get down to the humble business of

quietly tending the bit of the world that lies right at our fingertips. Yes, the world is in need of changing. Enmity and brokenness are all around. But in a garden, enemies are reconciled, our own turbulent hearts find peace, and the final fruit of our efforts is a stubborn and persistent hope.

Our human inheritance is an eagerness to climb stairways to heaven and send rockets to the moon. We dream big and aim high, yet ironically it is when we bend low to the ground, when we give our full attention to the dirt right around our feet, when we devote ourselves to tending and caring and planting, that we really do change the world. Gardens grow much more than plants: gardens grow *life*. Gardens grow thriving connections among fungi and insects, birds and animals, people and neighborhoods. When we care for a garden, we are caring for our own selves, and we are caring for the entire green and blue jewel that is the garden of planet Earth. Your pots of herbs on the windowsill may seem isolated and small, but they are a link with your neighbor's tomato bed, which is a link with the community garden, and a link to the forest preserve, the botanical garden, the organic farm—all of them joining up to wind the earth round in green ribbons of life. From seedtime to harvest and back again, the reconciling work of a garden is never finished, always ongoing, and, in every season, eager for us to join in and receive the *more* that is our heart's desire.

