

A PRIMER
ON
GROWING CHILDREN



BY RICK HURST

A Primer on Growing Children

Before planting a seed in the garden the soil must be properly prepared. Indeed, poorly prepared soil can deform, repress, dis-ease or even destroy a newly growing seedling. Soil preparation begins with tedious work. The ground must be uncovered to see that it contains nothing dangerous or harmful to young tender roots. All impure things must be removed. All stones of bitterness, rocks of anger, bits of sharp resentment, or buried pieces of old rusty conflicts that could harm tender roots must be removed.

After ensuring that harmful things are cleared away, the next step is to ensure the proper mixture of nutrients are contained in the soil. The soil must be overflowing with Patience that never fails. This ingredient is a rare and precious gift given by the Great Gardener to all worthy gardeners who have first cultivated their soil by removing harmful things, and who have recognized how important a nutrient of Patience is. In this case, the Great Gardener willingly bestows it from His endless bounty.

Once obtained, Patience mixes with the soil and produces the by-product nutrient called Understanding. Next we add one part Kindness to one part Firmness which when properly mixed into the soil, produces the vital nutrient called Justice, which is an all-important life-giving ingredient. Justice gives our seedlings strength if character, courage, a sense of fairness and respect for all life. Finally, we compost into the soil the ability to accept life as it comes. All these things combine together to produce a loving environment in which our seedlings grow up in safety, security and wholesomeness.

The Seedling

After the seedling has arrived and our garden is green with tender little ones our job becomes what can best be summed up as diligent protector. We must protect our seedling from starvation and thirst by keeping the soil nutrient- filled, and watering it with the sweat of our loving commitment to its well-being and good health. We must protect it from heat of hostility by shielding it with our love, and we must protect it from the bite of unloving frost.

We must carefully weed out less than ideal thoughts that invaders of our garden would have grow there. The diligent gardener will pull these weeds early on to insure that the weeds do not steal our seedling's food and thereby deprive it of life-giving ideals, morals and virtues. We protect from predators and vermin of all kind, giving up our lives rather than allow any poisonous creature to infect, inject or digest our beloved seedlings. We must be particularly watchful of signs of invasion by stealthy underground invaders who may prey upon and draw life from our seedlings. These are the most insidious vermin of all, and require Great Gardener given perception and intuition to detect.

We must also protect from the winds of changing morals, beliefs and values that blow all over the face of the earth. Too much exposure to certain kinds of winds: television, radio, music etc.- can cause our seedling to bend and not grow straight. There are times we must block exposure to unsavory winds, even at the risk of bringing down a gale storm upon ourselves.

Cultivation

The miracle of growth and unfoldment of gifts, abilities and purpose in our seedlings may be enhanced or hindered by the gardeners' actions. Contained deep within the seedling is a pattern of growth and destiny. How is it that a tomato becomes a tomato? What gardener knows that mystery? All we know is that it just becomes what is meant to be all by itself. The good gardener ensures that the very best environment so that the seedling can grow unhindered to its destiny. Consider the Bonsai Tree. The Japanese have mastered the art in which a tree sapling is planted in a shallow dish which stunts its growth. Then, using wire wrapped around its little body, they manipulate the sapling's growth by gradually bending and shaping the tiny limbs and trunk into the desired position. The end result is a very beautiful and realistic miniature tree that resembles a full grown tree in nature. And although these beautiful living things command much money due to the tremendous amount of time and effort invested in cultivating them, they are never-the-less the product of manipulation and unnatural stress and not what nature intended them to be.

Our seedlings must not be made to live up to our thoughts and ideas for them. They must not be molded. Seedlings must be allowed the dignity and freedom to follow their individual unfoldment and destiny. We can influence them by our example of what we would like them to be but short of insisting on basic courtesy from our seedlings and teaching them proper hygiene we **MUST NOT HOLD ANY EXPECTATIONS** of them. In this way they will grow to their own great potential and not our ideas for them.

Trouble Hints and Remedies

Invariably, because of the nature of things, problems will develop in the course of raising our seedlings. This is to be expected. Perfection in any endeavor is mostly a matter of learning from ones mistakes. No gardener is born prepared or self-sufficient in the art of gardening. The learning comes mainly from doing. Its trial and error and we will make mistakes that inadvertently harm our seedlings. Yet, because seedlings are very resilient, and once the cause of the problem is understood and corrected, chances are very good that your seedling will bounce back with renewed vigor and health.

Therefore, an important rule of gardening is to remain calm and never panic when we discover a problem. Charged emotions are always transmitted to the seedlings and will have an adverse affect upon their delicate system.

Here is a story about a young gardener: One day, while tending to the gardens our young gardener observed her seedling slumping over, showing signs of wilting and having a hard time standing upright on its own. Instead of remaining calm and watchful until she understood what was happening she hastily shoved a rod in the ground and tied her seedling to it. She didn't realize it at the time but she bruised some of the tender roots of our seedling causing greater harm. She then wound wire-ties around the stick and forced the seedling to stand upright, but after several days the seedling was wilted even more than before.

The young gardener was distressed and did not know what else to do. Feeling helpless she sat down in her garden and began to cry.

But just then a stranger happened by. He quietly looked over the situation and finally in a kind voice he said "If you would just loosen those wire ties the little one might not feel so choked. He needs to feel free from external supporting structures, so that his vital juices might circulate properly. Gradually he will recover, growing strong and learning to stand upright on his own.

Never use a supporting rod inappropriately as they can cause that which is strong to be weakened. And finally, I say, give the seedling a little shade through the noon hour and prevent this from happening again. The second rule of gardening is therefore, QUIET

Observation

The funny thing about problem solving is that once you are calm enough to see the problem correctly, the solution always becomes obvious

The third rule of gardening is ALWAYS ADMIT YOUR MISTAKES. If the young gardener had failed to see her error, if she had refused to take the strangers advice she might have inadvertently choked her seedling to death,

Admitting error serves to set our seedling free from the previous damage. Seedlings, being very sensitive to the most subtle of vibrations, come to respect the gardener who admits error and changes. This also tends to breed into them this very special ability because the action of humility in saying "I am sorry, I was wrong" teaches forgiveness. A noble trait.

Problem Seedlings

The wise old stranger would tell you that seedling problems come from one of three sources, singularly or in combination. The three sources of problem are 1) the primary growth environment, your soil, 2) external climatic and/or environmental stresses and 3) the bad seed.

The Soil

More times than not, the problems seedlings exhibit can be traced directly back to the soil in which it is growing. Analysis of the soil often reveals the soil is lacking in vital nutrients. Constant care and attention to the soil is a basic rule of proper gardening. Contaminates in the soil will cause adverse reaction in the growing seedlings and must be corrected if the seed is to grow to full maturity. Stones of bitterness, rocks of anger, and bits of impatient resentment act to deny the roots of the seedlings the nourishment that's required to thrive and grow.

The seedlings growing in soil in which inhospitable substances are found will have no choice but to feed upon those substances and reflect it in its pattern of unfoldment. The nutrients of patience, kindness and firmness breed love, understanding and courage. The substances of bitterness, anger and impatience breeds violence, hatred and rebellion. Yet, it is also true that contaminated soil can be made wholesome at any moment a gardener 1) determines that the soil is indeed lacking nutrients and/or is contaminated and 2) decides to do something about it. The tears shed over the sorry state of the soil and the reflected results in the seedlings immediately begin to nourish the soil, purifying and transforming it.

Climate and Environment

Although the roots of your seedling grow in your soil, they are nevertheless open to the influences of the world they are exposed to.

Strong roots in the good soil serve to anchor the seedlings from being blown off to grow roots in unsavory soils, or upon the sea to drown.

Weak roots in undernourished soil are an invitation to lose your seedling to any number of climatic or environmental influences. Your seedling will be protected by your unending commitment to his well being until he is strong enough to stand on his own against the elements.

Neglecting your responsibility for even a minute is an invitation to lose him.

The Bad Seed

Very rarely, and only for a purpose understood by the Great Gardener, a bad seed is allowed to grow in good soil. This particular gardener must have been chosen for a great destiny, because the patience, love, and perseverance required in raising such a seedling can only be given by the Great Gardener.

The act of loving in the face of such overwhelming disappointment and ungratefulness is indeed a supernatural gift. Thankfully, this almost never happens, but when it does, it surely something to do with the edification and growth of the gardener himself.

The Harvest

The reward of all true gardeners is the joy of having raised to full maturity the tiny seeds planted in our soil. The burden and toil of those moments when drought, ill-wind or flood threatened but were saved by our loving commitment is now forgotten.

When we did not give up in the seemingly hopeless moment, when we loved in the unloving moment, when we did not hate back in the hateful moment, when we believed when surrounded by doubt, when we did not yield when tempted to give up, when we remained centered when faced with impatience, when we stayed firm when assaulted, when we stood upon principle and where left alone, when we did not moan, groan or complain but were selfless and fair in the face of selfishness and unfairness; we will surely have discovered our reward upon the maturity of our crop.

For they have grown to reflect in themselves His goodness as found in us, and in so doing, say thank you for your long-suffering, devotion and love.

So, now our satisfaction is the knowledge of not only having grown our seedlings to full maturity, but having grown good gardeners who will go on to enrich the world after us.

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