



# FINDING GOD in the Garden

Devotions for Every Season



Editors of Guideposts

# The Best-Sown Seeds

JERRY MARTEN



*Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is  
the Lord's purpose that prevails.*

PROVERBS 19:21 (NIV)

I was moving into a new house, and my greatest desire was to have an outstanding radish garden. I pored over gardening manuals until I knew exactly how to plant one, then I tilled the soil and buried the radish seeds precisely at the recommended depth. After completing the first row with perfectionist zeal, I stood back to study my handiwork. Suddenly a brown-and-white blur streaked by—our beagle puppy, Sam! He snatched the packet of radish seeds and tore off.

By the time I caught him, it was too late. The seeds were scattered haphazardly. My only consolation was that I had planted that one perfect row.

I had a small harvest of radishes that summer—only they weren't from my meticulously planted row. In fact, none of those radish seeds sprouted. Yet it seemed as if every single seed Sam had strewn in his pell-mell flight across the garden germinated and grew beautifully.

As I glanced between my barren row and the lush path sown by my puppy, I reflected that it is God, not I, who makes things grow. He is in charge.



# "PUTTING IN THE SEED"

BY ROBERT FROST

*You come to fetch me from my work to-night  
When supper's on the table, and we'll see  
If I can leave off burying the white  
Soft petals fallen from the apple tree.  
(Soft petals, yes, but not so barren quite,  
Mingled with these, smooth bean and wrinkled pea;) )  
And go along with you ere you lose sight  
Of what you came for and become like me,  
Slave to a springtime passion for the earth.  
How Love burns through the Putting in the Seed  
On through the watching for that early birth  
When, just as the soil tarnishes with weed,  
The sturdy seedling with arched body comes  
Shouldering its way and shedding the earth crumbs.*



# A Gratitude Share

SABRA CIANCANELLI



*Ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you.*

JOB 12:8 (NRSV)

"Deep enough?" a little girl asked.  
I nodded.

Carefully, she pushed cucumber seeds into the tiny hill of dirt we molded together and patted them down.

I was volunteering at the elementary school's garden project, a program where teachers bring their classes outdoors to learn about the earth. This group of kids was an inclusion class, meaning that some of them have special challenges.

One boy didn't seem to talk or make eye contact. He held tightly to his seeds and kept his focus on the dirt.

"Here, I'll show you," I said, crouching beside him and planting one.

Slowly, carefully, he positioned his five seeds into the soil.

Less than an hour earlier, I had been stressed about a writing deadline, but squatting in the dirt with all of these helping hands, my anxiety had vanished, replaced by the sun and the children's excitement.

When it was almost time for the group to leave, we sat in a circle in the grass. The teacher thanked everyone



for helping and said, "Friends, let's have a gratitude share. If anything happened out here today that made you feel happy, you can share it with the group."

One girl raised her hand. "I'm happy for the garden because it's fun and I feel good. Oh, and I like to hear the birds sing."

Another child shared, "I'm grateful that we got to play in the dirt and see worms and bugs."

And then the boy who hadn't talked and was hesitant to plant his seeds raised his hand and in a loud, confident voice said, "I'm happy to grow stuff. I always wanted to grow something."

*Dear Lord, thank You for today, for easing my anxieties  
and sowing seeds of Your glory that will take root and  
flourish in a child's heart. Amen.*



*I like gardening—it's a place where  
I find myself when I need to lose myself.*

ALICE SEBOLD

# "SPRING"

BY GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

*Nothing is so beautiful as Spring—  
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;  
Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush  
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring  
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;  
The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush  
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush  
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.*

*What is all this juice and all this joy?  
A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning  
In Eden garden.—Have, get, before it cloy,  
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,  
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,  
Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning.*



# Lesson from a Squirrel

CATHY BRYANT



*See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

HEBREWS 12:15 (NIV)

Outside, a squirrel was hurriedly burying a pecan in my garden. I watched from a nearby window and heaved a sigh. That nut would become yet another tree for me to dig out of the flower beds next spring.

Watching this familiar scene, I reflected on the fact that, sadly, I have been like that squirrel, digging a hole in my heart and stuffing down strong emotions I didn't want to deal with at the time. I thought I was doing the right thing by hiding my hurt, but the results were even more catastrophic than the pecan saplings that appear each spring in my garden.

The anger and hurt I have refused to deal with have grown into saplings and even full-grown trees of bitterness and resentment. It's taken a lot of work to dig them out and clear the flowerbeds of my heart again. I've only been able to do this impossible work with God's help.

If you're like me and tend to bury the emotions you don't want to deal with—don't! I speak from experience: "Buried nuts" can take root, grow strong, and unleash a world of hurt on us and those around us.

Instead of squirrelling our pain away, we can call on the resources that are ours through God and His Word. The Bible gives us clear directives—including how to deal with our anger quickly, live at peace with others, and forgive as we've been forgiven.

Forgiveness is difficult work, but when we take the time to remember all that Christ has forgiven for us, it makes it easier. It helps to remember that carrying around the heavy weight of unforgiveness only hurts us.

I watched the squirrel until he ran up a tree at the back of my yard, grateful for God's reminder to deal honestly with my pain and not bury it away.



## REFLECTIONS





# Harvest Boon

VIRGINIA POEHLEIN



*Freely you have received, freely give.*

MATTHEW 10:8 (NIV)

The beans hung heavy on the vine. We also had a bumper crop of tomatoes—more than I could ever can. And my husband was so tired of zucchini casseroles that he wanted to plow the garden under.

"Let's give the surplus away," I said.

An old metal rack and a large bread tray formed my roadside stand. I loaded it up with okra, sweet potatoes, green beans, tomatoes, peas, radishes, and bell peppers from our garden. On a big sign I painted "Help Yourself," and provided bags, each containing a scripture verse written on a piece of paper.

Notes and gifts appeared, replacing the vegetables that had been taken. Fruit, Scripture bookmarks, a package of freshly dressed catfish, a lapel pin, even trading stamps were left behind. Some people called or came to our door to thank us.

Now I can hardly wait to gather vegetables in the morning. Some we keep for ourselves; the rest replenish our stand.

As the Gospel says, "Freely, ye have received, freely give."



# Flight of the Bumblebee

CANDEE FINK



*"Jesus replied, 'What is impossible with  
man is possible with God.'"*

LUKE 18:27 (NIV)

**H**ave you ever watched bumblebees fly? Tiny wings carry their relatively large bodies from flower to flower.

People used to insist that bumblebees aren't supposed to be able to fly. That is, someone once did a few simple calculations and determined that it would be *impossible* for a bumblebee to remain airborne according to the laws of aerodynamics.

Tell that to the bumblebee!

Actually, though, a more sophisticated analysis showed that bumblebees can fly because their wings operate more like helicopter blades. So although they couldn't take flight like a bird or a plane, it makes sense that they can fly. Their muscles vibrate rather than expand and contract, allowing them to beat their wings ten to twenty times faster than if they relied on nerve firing impulses alone.

So, no, it's not impossible for bees to fly!

And maybe, like the bumblebee, you will defy what others see as reality! Everything is possible with God.





*Plant seeds of expectation in your mind;  
cultivate thoughts that anticipate achievement.*

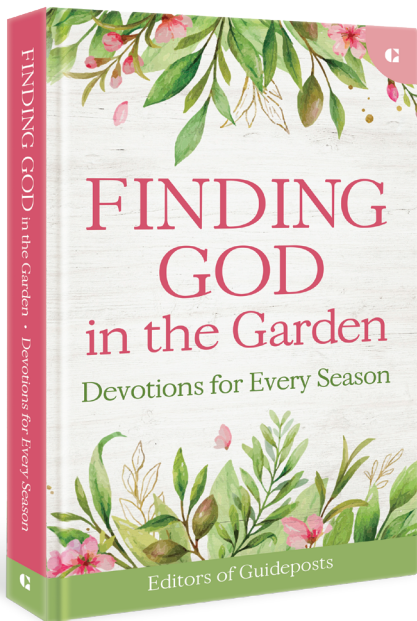
*Believe in yourself as being capable of  
overcoming all obstacles and weaknesses.*

NORMAN VINCENT PEALE



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sample pages from  
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