

REFLECTION ON MY GARDEN (Reflection 4)



My garden is a piece of heaven, a place of tranquillity in a busy and unforgiving world.

It provides sustenance for my soul, and for my body as well. It is a place of leisure and relaxation, a haven for wildlife and an eating place and a play, resting and training place for my dog. One small space, provides this abundance of being.

Gardens were important in the Bible too. Firstly, there was the garden of Eden, a perfection of God's creation, where the first humans evolved or were put, depending on your point of view. This was destroyed by humans giving into sin and temptation.

Then there was the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus was prayed fervently before his crucifixion. The garden of Gethsemane is a beautiful peaceful, shady place, just outside the walls of Jerusalem, which I was able to visit when many years ago.



It is not just the Jews that thought that gardens were important, but Islam too. In fact, Islam was created in a garden. The prophet Mohammed met in a courtyard or cloistered garden with his followers. Green for grass and greenery is also the colour of paradise in Islam. If you live in a hot country and it is dry and dusty, and the grass dies and turns yellow, you will understand why green is so important and the colour of life. The colour is also associated with healing.

Back to my garden. We had to work hard on it, it was a mess of overgrown bushes when we first came six years ago, the type of plants round industrial sites. This all had to be cleared. A new shed and fencing erected, every bush root dug out, but we found we had an apple tree!

I studied agroecology and Permaculture Design, and I would particularly encourage everyone to do a course in this, it is a design for living as well as gardens, and is a holistic approach. It also helps you make decisions.

So, my garden isn't like my neighbours, it has the usual greenhouse, compost heap and vegetable, fruit beds, flower beds, and grass. But fruit trees are cordons all round the side of the front and back gardens, and there are two ponds, back and front to encourage wildlife, and bird boxes that I made and a hedgehog house my husband and daughter made.

It has needed lots of chalk and compost to improve it, naturally it grows moss and heather and pine trees, hence Heath Lake and Heathlands road nearby, and there are lots of things I can't grow. However, I always keep a good supply of seeds, so as lockdown began, I planted more broad beans, carrots and potatoes plus tomatoes and salad in the tiny greenhouse. I have made sure it is well watered ever since, so I have a crop, don't go out to the shops too much and leave shopping for other people. I don't think it is a coincidence that God has led to me to the courses I have done.

It strikes me this is what God does. He sows a seed in us, then waters and nurtures it as it grows, then he hopefully takes pleasure in what we have become, as we too, set seed and produce fruit, serving God, and his community, people and nature. There are many parables like this, the Seed and the Sower and the Fruitful vine. This it seems to me, is the way to live our lives, being fruitful.

What has been really striking about my garden though, is not what I have done, but what nature has done. Nature is beginning to return. There are bluebells now, and for the first time this year, wild dog violets. There are also newts in my pond. Have you noticed how the birds have really sung and sung this year, and how there are bees in abundance?

This is what God does, let him in, and he will do the rest.

Spirit of God, renew the face of the Earth.