

The Garden of Life



Many of you know I have a new home I haven't moved into yet, as I'm working on selling my old one. I eagerly planted a nice-sized garden at the new place, thinking my boyfriend would tend to it a little between my weekly visits. After all, he had

helped get it ready and even planted some seeds, so I assumed we were in it together. The weather and my brief visits kept me from the garden, and I asked and reminded my boyfriend to help me out with watering and weeding, but all he did was water it a little. By the time I could spend some time in it, the garden was nothing but a thick bed of weeds, many to the point of seeding out. Human nature had me furious inside over all the precious time, money, and energy wasted, along with my boyfriend's disregard for something that he knew was important to me. But that only lasted a moment, as I remembered that by now in my life, I had a habit of just trying to love people no matter what, and that everything that challenges that is meant to teach me something more and to help me grow into the better person I am destined to be. So, while I could accept that I didn't like it, I still knew I had to keep loving him (no, I choose to keep loving him), even as he took a nap while I spent hours slaving in the mosquito-infested weed bed.

I put on my "conquer the world" attitude and went in. The hours of carefully and painfully (I have carpal tunnel in my dominant hand) trying to remove the weeds and hope for something I planted underneath to show itself gave me lots of quiet time to think about what this was trying to teach me, and it didn't take long to come to me. This garden was like life, plain as day.

First, I couldn't blame anyone for not nurturing or sheltering my garden (my life) from anything. I had planted it, I wanted it, and I was the only one responsible for it. While most people would have given up on it (as they do on things and people in life), I refused. I wanted to find something better, underneath. Some call that naïve, some call it crazy or unrealistic, but I call it desire, and I felt very wise and loving about it. And forgiving my boyfriend for the incredible mess I had to deal with now honestly felt pretty good too; just knowing I was capable and didn't consider whether he deserved it or not felt pretty good. (Even afterwards when my entire body was sore for days, and I had the worst sunburn of my life across the back of my waist!) Am I getting back at him a little, telling the world all this? Yea, I kinda hope so. . . ;)

Second, it became very clear to me how events and people in my life compared to the things in my garden, so much so, that I felt some emotions as I worked.

The handful of weeds I was throwing out were the big messes and people we need to leave behind in life, because our heart tells us, it is not helping us. Boy, is there a LOT of that! At times, I feel that's ALL there is, and it'd be easy to give up all hope that there's nothing good left. But I can't believe that, or I'd become a weed and then really, have no reason to continue on this journey. So faith and trust keeps me going, and eventually, I would find something good underneath. Sometimes it'd be a long time and what I found looked almost non-existent, but there was something there, and finding it felt like finding treasure. Not because of what I found, but because I hadn't given up; it didn't even matter if the plant I found would survive or not. All that mattered was that I had come for it. There were times too, I was surprised to uncover a strong, healthy plant, or even a nice row of them; they had not been visible at all, to the rest of the world. It was pretty cool to finally see something no one else could!

Other times, I'd notice that I had pulled out a good plant, along with the weeds, and I'd feel bad, like I was rushing too much or was being too careless. Then I realized, I was doing the best I could, and maybe it was just not meant to stay there and grow. This could be compared to people that leave our lives for any reason. I know by this point in my life that

once they have finished the lesson they are meant to help you with, it's just time for them to go, for various reasons of their own life. It truly wasn't my fault or my doing; it was just meant to be. Sometimes they choose to leave and sometimes their dedication to something or someone else forces them to go (like great friends I had lost because they had to "pick a side" with someone or something else they felt they needed to stick with, for whatever reason.) It was all okay; we would all be fine and continue our journeys.

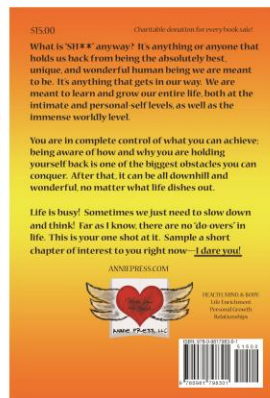
Sometimes in trying to do a good thing by pulling the weeds, I'd bump a stem or a branch of a good plant and hurt it. Sometimes this happens in life, though none of us really intend to hurt anyone or anything in our life. We just have to do the best we can, apologize and nurture what we can going forward, perhaps through some extra attention or effort. It also told me to slow down a little and look more closely before proceeding, a good lesson for all of us, all of the time!

I didn't finish the garden that day, it will be a work in progress, like life. I'm happy to say I'm well over half-way though, again, like my life, as I approach 50, and at least I caught most of the weeds that were trying to spread bad seed on my garden. Most days, that's a very good day in life, isn't it? After all my effort, I am happy to report that there were a lot more good plants down there than I expected. Yes, the neglect choked out and killed or stunted a lot of the good seed I had planted, and that's too bad, but again, my focus only needs to be on what's left now and what I can do with it. How do I know? Maybe the soil just wasn't the right kind for those plants? There's no point in continuing to look for, or be upset over, what didn't happen; it's gone. The fragile plants that are left need my care and attention now. This is a great reminder to live in the present and do our best with each moment we are given, and NEVER look back on the past, except to remind you to live the present to the fullest.

Certain things in my garden (I guess what was meant to be, despite what I planted originally) will thrive and I will reap the benefits of it. I will also continue to work on the weed patch that is left, and whatever shows up later; it's just what we do in life. There's also room now, if I want to plant more seeds. There's nothing stopping me from trying again. Maybe it just wasn't the right time before, and it's never too late. The beauty of it is, with the right attitude and effort, we can live in a beautiful garden, every day, and never give up when a few (or a lot of) weeds show up. The weeds will teach us something, for sure, if we just keep our heart open to it, so it's always good, just like everything truly is, in life. Tend to and enjoy your garden, and ask God to bless and watch over it. . . it's the only one you got! *~Mary Anne*

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