

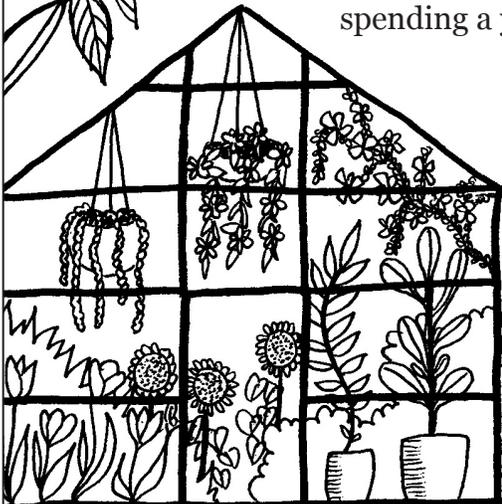
I usually start to get excited about gardening in January. This is not because I can do anything about it. Here in Canada, although there may be a temporary thaw, January is a month of snowflakes and icicles, and my gardens are covered with a thick white blanket. But this is the time of year when a seed catalogue appears in my mailbox and I begin to think about what I might grow this year.

I am not an experienced, or even a very good gardener, but digging, and planting, and watering, and waiting, and finally at the end of it all, partaking of the fruits of all these labours is an experience I look forward to.

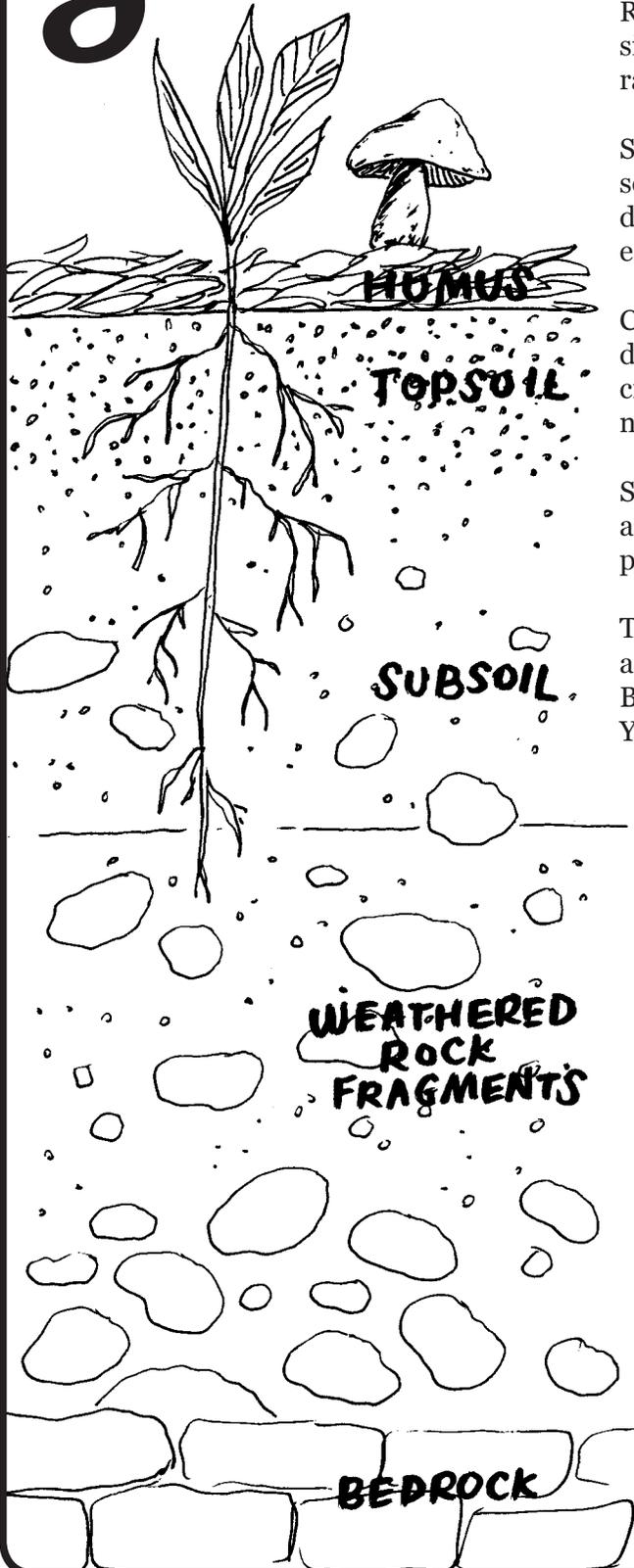
Similarities to our spiritual life pop out at me all the time. When plants don't get enough water, they wilt and stop growing, and if not rescued in time, will die. Seeds scattered on hard ground do get eaten by the birds. Weeds will take over and choke out everything else. And there is never a time in your life when you are done. As long as you have a garden you will have to dig, and plant, and water, and wait.

Experienced gardeners have accumulated a lot of wisdom on how to get the most out of their gardens. I am hoping that spending a year contemplating how gardens work will also help us in our spiritual garden.

Have fun!



soil



The dust of the earth, or soil, is not all the same everywhere. Some factors affecting the type of soil in an area are the climate, the parent rock, and the surrounding natural vegetation. Most soils are a mixture of various percentages of sand, silt and clay.

Rocky soil lacks nutrients, can be difficult to till, and since it is often hard-packed, water tends to run off rather than sink in.

Soil that is mostly sand is also a problem. This type of soil cannot store water—water enters quickly, but also drains quickly. It contains very few nutrients as they are easily washed away, and it lacks micro-organisms.

Clay soil sticks to your shovel and boots, it gets muddy and takes awhile to dry out, and then when it does, cracks and becomes hard. But clay also holds onto nutrients and gives roots a good firm grip.

Silty soil has particles that are a little bigger than clay and although it is more fertile, it is also quite dense with poor drainage. It is found along river valleys and deltas.

The first man was made from the dust of the earth, and a consequence of sin was that man returns to the dust. But what can be done with that dust while it is alive? You can grow a garden.

1. Genesis 2:7
2. Isaiah 64:8
3. Psalm 100:3
4. Psalm 139:14-16
5. Psalm 39:4-5
6. Psalm 103:13-16
7. 2 Corinthians 4:7-10
8. Acts 17:24-28
9. Isaiah 51:1
10. Psalm 119:73
11. Psalm 37:4-5
12. Isaiah 46:3-4
13. Mark 4:14-17
14. Genesis 3:19
15. Ecclesiastes 3:19-20
16. Ecclesiastes 12:7-8
17. Psalm 44:23-26
18. Mark 4:20
19. Job 34:14-15
20. Psalm 90:9-12
21. Psalm 104:29-30
22. Isaiah 17:10-11
23. Isaiah 45:9-12
24. Jeremiah 18:4-6
25. Romans 9:20-21
26. 2 Chronicles 7:14-15
27. Isaiah 66:1-2
28. 1 Peter 5:6
29. Isaiah 57:15
30. Matthew 23:12
31. Isaiah 43:5-7

January

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

Send a note to someone (special anniversaries, someone I am praying for, someone I am thinking of):

Dust

Here is a problem, a wonder for all to see.
Look at this marvelous thing I hold in my hand!
This is a magic surprising, a mystery
Strange as a miracle, harder to understand.

What is it? Only a handful of earth: to your touch
A dry rough powder you trample beneath your feet,
Dark and lifeless; but think for a moment, how much
It hides and holds that is beautiful, bitter, or sweet.

Think of the glory of color! The red of the rose,
Green of the myriad leaves and the fields of grass,
Yellow as bright as the sun where the daffodil blows,
Purple where violets nod as the breezes pass.

Think of the manifold form, of the oak and the vine,
Nut, and fruit, and cluster, and ears of corn;
Of the anchored water-lily, a thing divine,
Unfolding its dazzling snow to the kiss of morn.

Think of the delicate perfumes borne on the gale,
Of the golden willow catkin's odor of spring,
Of the breath of the rich narcissus waxen-pale,
Of the sweet pea's flight of flowers, of the nettle's sting.

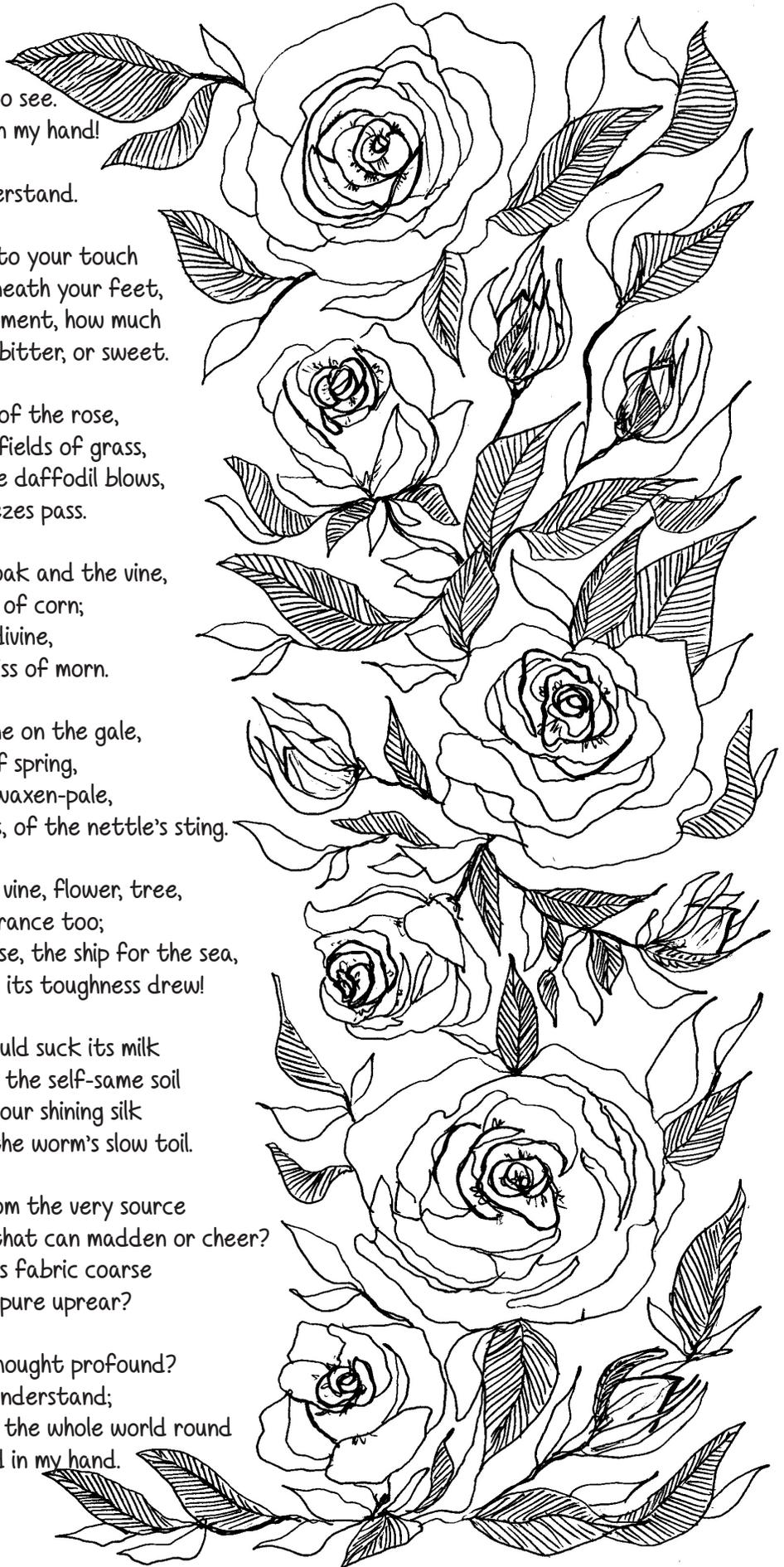
Strange that this lifeless thing gives vine, flower, tree,
Color and shape and character, fragrance too;
That the timber that builds the house, the ship for the sea,
Out of this powder its strength and its toughness drew!

That the cocoa among the palms should suck its milk
From this dry dust, while dates from the self-same soil
Summon their sweet rich fruit: that our shining silk
The mulberry leaves should yield to the worm's slow toil.

How should the poppy steal sleep from the very source
That grants to the grapevine juice that can madden or cheer?
How does the weed find food for its fabric coarse
Where the lilies proud their blossoms pure uprear?

Who shall compass or fathom God's thought profound?
We can but praise, for we may not understand;
But there's no more beautiful riddle the whole world round
Than is hid in this heap of dust I hold in my hand.

By Celia Thaxter (1835-1894)



December/January

TO DO THIS WEEK:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Prayer	<input type="checkbox"/>							
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bible	<input type="checkbox"/>							
<input type="checkbox"/>	Exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>							
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>							
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>							
<input type="checkbox"/>									

Thursday

31

Daily Tasks

<hr/>	<hr/>
---	---

Friday

Genesis 2:7

1

Daily Tasks

<hr/>	<hr/>
---	---

Saturday Isaiah 64:8

2

Daily Tasks

<hr/>	<hr/>
---	---

the Creator

I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me.

I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light,
and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil:
I the LORD do all these things.

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour
down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring
forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together;
I the LORD have created it.

(Isaiah 45:5-8 KJV)

praise

give thanks

recognize sin

ask for help

reverence

Hebrew “yare”: to fear

*“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints,
and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.”
(Psalm 89:7)*

Take some time to ponder these facts and how they may relate to our spiritual life and develop reverence for our Creator.



The dust of the ground is bits of rock worn down by water and wind.



Good soil is 45% minerals (rock), 25% air, 25% water, and 5% organic matter.



Good soil is a fairly equal combination of sand, silt, and clay.



Sandy soil contains large particles and therefore cannot hold on to water.



Clay soil contains the smallest particles and is easily compacted restricting air flow.



Silt particles are between sand and clay in size.



The type of parent material and the abundance or lack of rainfall are some factors that determine the Ph balance of soil. Most plants are happiest in soil that is in the neutral range.



Acid soil can be made more alkaline by adding limestone.



Alkaline soil can be made more acid by adding sulphur.



Unprotected soil is easily eroded by wind and water. Soil is protected when it is covered with a layer of vegetation. Trees growing nearby are also helpful to break the wind.

meditation

A page for meditation notes. The page features a decorative border with rounded corners and a series of horizontal lines for writing. The word "meditation" is centered at the top of the page.

Wednesday Mark 4:14-17

13 Daily Tasks

Thursday Genesis 3:19

14 Daily Tasks

Friday Ecclesiastes 3:19-20

15 Daily Tasks

Saturday Ecclesiastes 12:7-8

16 Daily Tasks

Blest!

Oh! blest art thou whose steps may rove
Through the green paths of vale and grove
Or, leaving all their charm below
Climb the wild mountains airy brow.

And gaze afar o'er cultured plains
And cities with their stately fanes,
And forests that beneath thee lie,
And ocean mingling with the sky.

For man can show thee naught so fair
As Nature's varied marvels there.
And if thy pure and artless breast,
Can feel their grandeur, thou art blest!

For thee the stream in beauty flows,
For thee the gale of summer blows,
And in deep glen and wood-walk free
Voices of joy still breathe for thee.

But happier far, if then thy soul
Can soar to Him who made the whole,
If to thine eye the simplest flower
Portray His bounty and His power!

If, in whatever is bright or grand
Thy mind can trace His viewless hand,
If Nature's music bid thee raise
Thy song of gratitude and praise

If heaven and earth, with beauty fraught
Lead to His throne thy rapturous thought;
If there thou lovest His love to read
Then wanderer! thou art blest indeed.



experience

There are three types of rock:

IGNEOUS: cooled molten rock (magma or lava)

SEDIMENTARY: particles which settle out of water or air

METAMORPHIC existing rock changed by heat, pressure or reactive fluids.

Hunt for local pieces of rock. Try to identify them.



If you are able to get a scoop of soil from your garden, fill a clean jar halfway with soil, then fill to the top with water. Put the lid on tightly and shake for several minutes. Set it aside until the next day so it can settle. The largest particles (sand) will be on the bottom, middle-sized (silt) next, and above that the smallest particles (clay). The ideal mix is 40% sand, 40% silt, 20% clay.



What kind of trees grow naturally near you? If the trees are predominantly evergreen, the soil may tend naturally to acid. If the trees are maples, oaks, and poplars, the soil may be more likely alkaline. Get to know some of the trees in your neighbourhood.



Go for a walk in a forest. If you have snow, dig down to the forest floor. What is protecting the soil?

Sketch some of your finds or observations below.

Impediments to Faith

There are other forces which erect barriers against true conviction. Here is a short list: intellectual pride, idle speculation, worldliness, moral antipathy. Think about it. Intellectual pride is a condition of mind which cannot bring itself to admit that it might have been wrong; unteachable, because to yield to the teaching may mean giving up long held opinions and cherished ideas. Idle speculation regards the truth as an interesting theory -- a subject for a pleasant discourse; a curiosity. The interest is shallow and superficial. Worldliness really means living as though this were the only world; a preoccupation with the material. The mind is dominated by things. Moral antipathy is a kind of self-induced antagonism which results in a frame of mind out of sympathy with the truth, because to surrender to the truth means an interference with habits and indulgences long established and firmly entrenched; a disturbance to carnal satisfaction which cannot be faced.

When you think of it, these are serious impediments. In experience they are not neatly separated as they are in analysis. People are affected partly by one and partly by another. In practice they are entwined. But they are always serious. The truth is not easily discerned by the jaundiced mind, mastered by pride and prejudice. Spiritual reality is not likely to be discovered by mere idle curiosity. The mind saturated by material influences is not often attracted to the thing of the Spirit. Those who actually love darkness tend very much to hate the light. These are barriers to conviction. It does not mean that they are impenetrable, but penetration demands resolution, courage and humility. This sifts the contenders.

On the positive side, one thing becomes evident. In the process of coming to conviction a point is reached where the essential thing is a humble and receptive mind. The Bible insists that the truth is discovered most of all by lowly and contrite souls. To come in any other mood is to be greatly disadvantaged. It does not rest upon some accident of education or rank. Progress demands honesty, reverence and sympathy. Those who seek a new sensation, a material advantage, a cloak for self-advancement, are in the wrong department.

—from *The Genius of Discipleship* by D. Gillett

Do these impediments to faith make you think of the different kinds of soil?

What are your reasons for conviction that there is a God who is the Creator of all?

What causes you to doubt? What creates wonder and belief?

The truth about faith is that it allows for doubt. Doubts will always exist no matter what you believe because faith is not about certainty: faith is about the best answer for the evidence. God does not force belief upon anyone, He asks us to choose. However, once we have reasoned things out and made a choice we need to stick with it. The Bible speaks of a double-minded man and how he is then unstable. To move forward in life, COMMITMENT to one way or another is key. Choose with your whole heart.

Make a list of the truths about God that can humble us and cause us to worship Him.

truths about God...

A large rectangular area with a decorative border and horizontal lines, intended for writing. The border is a thin black line with rounded corners at the top and bottom. The interior is filled with horizontal lines, creating a series of rows for text. The text "truths about God..." is written at the top center of this area.

Wednesday Isaiah 66:1-2

27 Daily Tasks

Thursday 1 Peter 5:6

28 Daily Tasks

Friday Isaiah 57:15

29 Daily Tasks

Saturday Matthew 23:12

30 Daily Tasks
