

# A bit of earth

by Heidi Martin



When I was a girl, Christmas came twice a year. We celebrated the birth of Jesus on December 25th, but that same feeling of joy, hope and new beginnings washed over me when Dad brought home seeds for our summer garden. My brothers and I would plop down on the grass and watch Dad push fresh earth back and forth with the rake and then make long, straight rows for seeds. We took turns planting peppers, tomatoes, onions, beans, carrots for our lop-eared bunnies, and my favorite, strawberries. One year we experimented with pumpkins which took over the entire yard. We had so many that we sold them for fifty cents each in a wheelbarrow by the road. We made forty dollars off those pumpkins.

In the sweet story *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, Mary Lennox begins as a small, sickly child known for her limp yellow hair, sour expressions and terrible temper. But Mary becomes enthralled by the outdoor world and, one morning, gathers all her courage to ask her gruff uncle for a garden of her own.

“Might I,” quavered Mary, “might I have a bit of earth?...To plant seeds in—to make things grow—to see them come alive.”

I recently curled up in a blanket to watch an older version of this story on VHS. During this particular scene, shivers of excitement raced up and down my spine and I heard my mom whisper, “I love this part.”

What is it about Mary’s question that causes us to shiver with hope and excitement? What is it that causes us to actually become Mary standing before her uncle with one overwhelmingly deep desire? What is it that resonates in our hearts? I wonder if “it” is simply the joy of digging in the earth and watching new life spring forth.

In many ways, gardening is ingrained into our very beings. We began by gardening in the Garden of Eden, and gardens as large as farms or as small as window boxes have been part of our lives ever since. Broadening the definition, we “garden” as we raise families and grow homes. We plant seeds of love and kindness into our children and grandchildren. We water with grace. We pull out weeds of poor decisions or junk food or inappropriate language. We harvest through laughter, accomplishments, and even a good

night of sleep.

This month, we honor our mothers who plant, water, weed, and harvest on a daily basis.

One way our mothers garden is through the beauty of enduring marriage. Thomas Kinkade is famous for his paintings, but he is also an author, and together with his wife, Nanette, penned *The Many Loves of Marriage*. The story begins with the Kinkade love story and each chapter that follows is dedicated to a different facet of love including “An Enduring Love,” “A Sharing Love,” and “A Sheltering Love.” The language is beautifully poetic and simple. The stories are pleasant and hopeful. The book is grounded in truth and life and is inspirational to the married and single alike.

A woman’s position as wife and mother is tremendously powerful—as powerful as sunlight on a patch of vegetables waiting to sprout. In the work place, in marriage, with children, and at home, our mothers have the ability to build up and encourage, or break down and hinder. Her role is highly influential, and in many ways, this is a gift which, when used well, reaps a bountiful harvest. Kati Marton highlights this unique capacity in women through her book, *Hidden Power*. Beginning with Edith and Woodrow Wilson and continuing through Laura and George W. Bush, Marton details the marriage relationship between each president and spouse noting how the First Ladies significantly impacted the nation, just as our mothers significantly impact their own “nations.”

But in gardens, as in life, unexpected difficulties arise. Though our mothers pour heart and soul into their gardens, they face the inevitable destruction of weeds, insects, drought and floods. Because of this, we ask you mothers, please also care for the garden of your own soul. One way to do so is to read *My Heart’s Cry* by Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of Billy and Ruth Graham. Dedicated “to those who long for more than just enough of Jesus,” the pages of this book offer comfort and rejuvenation. The chapters include titles such as “More of His Voice in My Ear,” “More of His Hope in My Grief,” “More of His Love in My Home,” and “More of His Courage in My Convictions.”

Mothers, we take your calloused, strong hands in our own and thank you for your years of gardening. And, with your blessing and watchful eye, we take our seeds, plant them, and watch them come alive in our own bit of earth. 🌱

*These books are recommended by my own mother, a proficient gardener in more ways than one.*

# Stirrings