

Growing Point

Garden lessons in the Bible

Week 12: Gleaning the Fields

When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

-Deuteronomy 24: 21 NRSV

We do not have grapes in the MCC garden, but we have peas, beans and raspberries. When we harvest these, the fruits are not necessarily as obvious as with a zucchini or a tomato. Instead, we have to look carefully under the leaves to find them. Some of them can be so well hidden, that they escape our eyes and don't get picked.

The passage in Deuteronomy says that when we gather the harvest, we should not glean what is left. To better understand what it means to not glean what is left, consider the translation of this same passage found in The Message: And when you cut the grapes in your vineyard, don't take every last grape – leave a few for the foreigner, the orphan, and the widow. From this translation, we can gather that going back through a field to glean it, means to go back and pick all the fruits that were missed the first time through.

Walking into a garden that is overflowing with ripe vegetables, it is tempting to pick every last vegetable and keep them all for yourself. But this passage in Deuteronomy tells us that we should not do this. We should share some with those who are vulnerable and don't have enough to eat. This also can serve the function of having seeds to be able to plant next year.

Another Bible verse that explores the concept of gleaning is Ruth 2: 7-8. This passage is from the story about Ruth and Naomi. After their husbands have died, they are having a difficult time finding enough food to eat. Ruth says to Boaz, "Please, let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers."

Soul Water

Nurturing your soul through prayer

Week 12: Gleaning the Fields

Dear God,

Thank you for the bountiful harvest that we are gathering from our garden.

Thank you for the yummy meals that fill our tummies from this harvest.

Everything is so delicious, it is tempting to harvest and eat every single last fruit and vegetable ourselves.

But as we are surrounded by so much, we also know that there are many who have very little.

Help us to remember to share our harvest with those who are less fortunate than ourselves, so their tummies can be full with yummy food too.

Amen

Earth Explorations

Nurturing Connections to the Soil

Week 12: Gleaning the Fields

One of the reasons for not eating every last fruit and vegetable that you harvest is to have seed available to grow next year. How effective this is, depends on a couple variables discussed below.

Will hybrid plants produce seeds that will grow?

Hybrid plants have been bred to produce fruits with particular characteristics. Sometimes, such as with watermelon and grapes, the desirable characteristic they have been bred for is that they have no seeds. Other times the fruit will have a seed, but it either won't grow at all, or if it does the characteristics of the plant that does grow will be very different than the parent plant which produced it.

How long can seeds be stored & still grow?

1-yr 2-yr 3-yr 4-yr 5-yr

leek	corn	asparagus	beet	broccoli
onion	okra	bean	Brussels sprouts	cabbage
parsnip	parsley	carrot	mustard	cauliflower
		pea	pepper	celery
			pumpkin	Chinese cabbage
			tomato	collard
				cucumber
				eggplant
				endive
				kale
				kohlrabi
				lettuce
				muskmelon
				radish
				rutabaga
				spinach
				squash
				turnip
				watermelon

From

<http://faculty.matcmadison.edu/mchristoffel/plants/seeds/viability.htm>

Seeds for Thought

Additional Resources to Nurture Soil & Soul

Week 12: Gleaning the Fields

Helping Others Help Themselves

The passage in Deuteronomy suggests that we should not glean our garden – we should not go back through the rows a second time and pick anything we missed the first time. Instead, we should leave those for the ‘aliens, orphans, and widows’ to come to pick and eat. Maybe this really happened in biblical times. But today our sense of personal property is so strong, it is unlikely that anyone in need is going to randomly come into our garden and pick what they want.

So we need to be creative about how we share the part of our harvest that would be the equivalent to what would have been left behind by not gleaning. What ideas do you have?

Some possibilities are to take some of your harvest to a food pantry, to set up a ‘free’ roadside stand, or to invite someone in need to a meal or to come harvest from your garden. Can you think of any other possibilities?

Your challenge for this week is to work with your family to share food with someone who is in need.

