

Growing Point

Garden lessons in the Bible

Week 8: Vines and Branches

Jesus said: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."

- John 15:5 NRSV

Jesus' story about the vine and branches is found near the end of the book of John in a section broadly labeled 'a summary of Jesus' teaching'. When Jesus told stories, he often used metaphors – using one thing to describe another thing. In this case, Jesus was telling a story about parts of a plant, but he was really telling a story about God, Jesus, each of us, and what we can and can't do depending on whether or not we choose to let God and Jesus guide our life.

To understand what Jesus meant by his story of the vine and the branches, it is helpful to visualize a vine plant. The roots are of course underground, firmly rooting the vine in place and providing water and other nutrients to the plant. The roots come together in a single main stem where the vine emerges from the ground. As the vine grows, smaller stems branch off the main central stem. Eventually, fruits (such as cantaloupe, watermelon, cucumbers, pumpkins, and zucchini) develop on the branches.

In Jesus' story, God is the roots, Jesus is the main stem (or vine as he refers to it), each of us is a branch coming off the main stem, and the fruits are the good things we achieve in our lives.

If the main stem of the vine is cut near the ground, the whole plant dies. Applying Jesus' metaphor, if the connection between Jesus and God were cut, then our connection with God would also be cut. Without this connection, we cannot do great things.

If a single branch is cut off the vine, that branch dies, but the main stem and other branches survive, although without the lost branch, the vine isn't quite as healthy as it would be otherwise. So, Jesus is saying that we can do much greater things when we are connected to Jesus. He is also saying that the more people (branches) that are connected to him, the healthier the vine will be and the more fruits there will be (society will be healthier and collectively more great things will be achieved).

Soul Water

Nurturing your soul through prayer

Week 8: Vines and Branches

Dear God,

I love the vines that grow in the garden.

Thank you for watermelon, for cantaloupe, for zucchini, for cucumbers, and for pumpkins.

God, you are the roots that keep us grounded.

Jesus is the main stem of the vine.

Each of us is a branch off the main stem.

The fruits are the great things that we achieve when we choose to let you guide our life.

Thank you for our connection to you through Jesus.

Amen

Earth Explorations

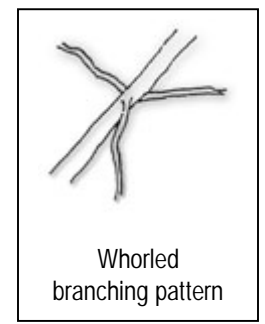
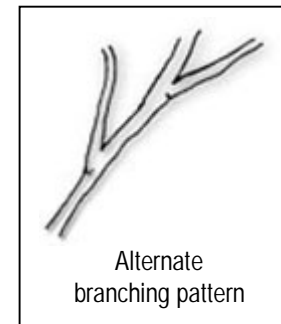
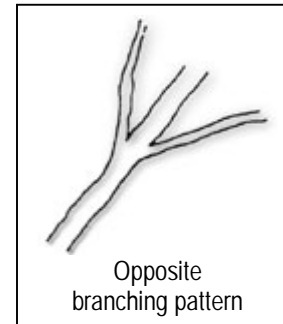
Nurturing Connections to the Soil

Week 8: Vines and Branches

Plant Scavenger Hunt

Have you ever looked closely at a plant or a tree to notice the pattern of how the stems/branches or leaves attach to the stem/trunk? For a particular kind of plant or tree this pattern is always the same, but between different kinds of plants and trees there are several different patterns. So, all watermelons will have the same pattern, but watermelons and green peppers won't necessarily have the same pattern.

The three most common patterns are called opposite, alternate and whorled.



Your challenge is to go outside and look at as many plants and trees as you can. See how many plants and trees you can find that fit each branching pattern. Can you find more than anyone else in your family?

Seeds for Thought

Additional Resources to Nurture Soil & Soul

Week 8: Vines and Branches

Did you know...?

- Watermelon, cantaloupe, zucchini, pumpkins, and cucumbers are vines that grow in the garden. Can you think of any others?
- Each flower on a vine, if it gets pollinated, will turn into one fruit/vegetable.
- Giant pumpkins are encouraged to grow even bigger by taking off all but one pumpkin per vine. This way the vine puts all its energy into a single pumpkin.
- The world's biggest pumpkin was grown in 2007 in Rhode Island. It weighed 1,689 pounds – as much as a small car. How do you think they weighed it? In that same year, someone grew a pumpkin in Wisconsin that weighed 1,427 pounds. For more info: <http://www.backyardgardener.com/record.html>
- Watermelon is originally from Africa.
- Scientists at Oklahoma State University have determined that watermelon vines, if left undisturbed, normally grow to be 12-16 feet long – that is 2 or 3 times as long as your mom or dad.
- Watermelon is Oklahoma's State Vegetable (strawberry is its state fruit).
- The biggest zucchini ever grown in Alaska weighed 59 pounds. For a picture, check out www.bountea.com/alaskagiant/state_records.htm