**GARDENING AS A SPIRITUAL PATH**

Greenville UU Fellowship

Covenant Group Session Plan

**Welcome, Chalice Lighting:** *Here we are, together in this space. By our love and by our covenant, we make this a holy place. We light the chalice of Unitarian Universalism in honor of the light that lives in each of us, the light that shines among us, and the light we bring into the world.*

**Check In:** How have you been since we last met? What are you growing and cultivating in your life just now?

**Opening Reading:** However many years she lived, Mary always felt that 'she should never forget that first morning when her garden began to grow'. ~ Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*

**Questions to prompt and guide discussion:**

1. What experiences have you had with gardening?
2. If you don’t care for gardening, what do you NOT like about it?
3. What have been your most and least favorite outdoor tasks?
4. What have you learned from gardening/nature/the plant world?
5. What ideas do you have for what gardens might become to people or communities?
6. What have gardens helped you to appreciate?

**Words from the Common Bowl: Quotes/Readings**

**Sharing** (Deep listening--no cross talk)

**Sitting in Silence:** Breathe together in silence for two minutes.

**Open Discussion** (Cross talk allowed)

**Closing reading:** If you wish to make anything grow, you must understand it, and understand it in a very real sense. 'Green fingers' are a fact, and a mystery only to the unpracticed. But green fingers are the extensions of a verdant heart. ~ Russell Page, *The Education of a Gardener*

**Announcements/Plans**

**Check out:** *How would you like to be held in heart and mind before we meet again?*

**Extinguish the Chalice**

**Readings:**

Odd as it may appear to some, I can think of no better form of personal involvement in the cure of the environment than that of gardening. A person who is growing a garden, if he is growing it organically, is improving a piece of the world. He is producing something to eat, which makes him somewhat independent of the grocery business, but he is also enlarging, for himself, the meaning of food and the pleasure of eating.  
~Wendell Berry, *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays*

It is such a pleasure to sink one's hands into the warm earth, to feel at one's fingertips the possibilities of the new season.” ~ Kate Morton, *The Forgotten Garden*

A garden should make you feel you've entered privileged space -- a place not just set apart but reverberant -- and it seems to me that, to achieve this, the gardener must put some kind of twist on the existing landscape, turn its prose into something nearer poetry.  
~ Michael Pollan, *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*

Anthropocentric as the gardener may be, he recognizes that he is dependent for his health and survival on many other forms of life, so he is careful to take their interests into account in whatever he does. He is in fact a wilderness advocate of a certain kind. It is when he respects and nurtures the wilderness of his soil and his plants that his garden seems to flourish most. Wildness, he has found, resides not only out there, but right here: in his soil, in his plants, even in himself...But wildness is more a quality than a place, and though humans can't manufacture it, they can nourish and husband it...The gardener cultivates wildness, but he does so carefully and respectfully, in full recognition of its mystery.  
~ Michael Pollan, *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*

By bringing a soulful consciousness to gardening sacred space can be created outdoors.   
~ S. Kelley Harrell, *Nature's Gifts Anthology*

After Nicholas hung up the phone, he watched his mother carry buckets and garden tools across the couch grass toward a bed that would, come spring, be brightly ablaze as tropical coral with colorful arctotis, impatiens, and petunias. Katherine dug with hard chopping strokes, pulling out wandering jew and oxalis, tossing the uprooted weeds into a black pot beside her.  
The garden will be beautiful, he thought. But how do the weeds feel about it? Sacrifices must be made. ~ Stephen M. Irwin, *The Dead Path*

“There is something soothing about working in the yard. Planting seeds and seeing them poke green out of the dirt. And it gets you out of the house without having to go too far.”   
~ Michael Lee West, *Crazy Ladies*

As far as Frances was concerned, gardening was simply open-air housework. And housework done properly, as we all know, can kill you. ~ Sarah Waters, *The Paying Guests*

Why do we make gardens? The act seems so extravagant, so illogical. Don’t we have enough hard work in our lives already? Are we looking for more? Why on earth do we bother?   
It takes a kind of courage. You have to learn to cherish. You have to dare, to take the risk, to bother, to care. To make a garden, you have to be able to love and to see yourself as capable of nurturing.  
 It takes patience, too. If the garden is to thrive you must commit yourself to it for years, for the creation of a garden takes place over time. Like a child, a garden has needs that have to be met, whether we feel like it or not, day after day.  
You have to have confidence. You have to take charge and be responsible. You have to act upon the garden.   
 And you have to let it act upon you. Because it will act upon you. And will knit you together with the rest of the world. It will not let you stand apart.  
 The challenge is hard, but it is irresistible. To get dirty, to get involved. To act and be acted upon. That is life.   
~Simone Martel, *Expectant Gardener*

Gardening is the handiest excuse for being a philosopher. Nobody guesses, nobody accuses, nobody knows, but there you are, Plato in the peonies, Socrates force-growing his own hemlock. A man toting a sack of manure across his lawn is kin to Atlas letting the world spin easy on his shoulder. ~ Ray Bradbury, *Dandelion Wine*

Weather is more important when you have a garden. There's nothing like listening to a shower and thinking how it is soaking in around your green beans. ~Marcelene Cox

You can bury a lot of troubles when you’re digging in the dirt. ~Author Unknown

Garden writing is often very tame, a real waste when you think how opinionated, inquisitive, irreverent and lascivious gardeners themselves tend to be. Nobody talks much about the muscular limbs, dark, swollen buds, strip-tease trees and unholy beauty that have made us all slaves of the Goddess Flora. ~Ketzel Levine

In the garden I tend to drop my thoughts here and there. To the flowers I whisper the secrets I keep and the hopes I breathe. I know they are eavesdropping for the angels.

~Dodinsky, [www.dodinsky.com](http://www.dodinsky.com/)