

# Digging Deeper: The Art of Contemplative Gardening

Gardening is not merely an act of planting and nurturing plants, but it goes deeper than that. It has the potential to become a contemplative practice, providing solace and peace while connecting us to the beauty of nature. Contemplative gardening is an art that allows us to slow down, immerse ourselves in the present moment, and create a harmonious space that nurtures both our external environment and our inner selves.

## Understanding Contemplative Gardening

Contemplative gardening involves more than just cultivation. It is about approaching gardening with mindfulness and intention, making it a spiritual and meditative endeavor. It is about tending to the needs of plants while also nourishing the soul. The garden becomes a sacred and secluded space for reflection, where one can find solace and clarity amidst the chaos of everyday life.

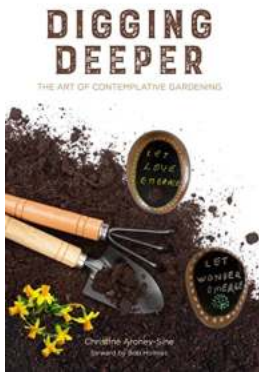
Creating a contemplative garden involves thoughtful design and careful selection of elements that promote tranquility and reflection. The choice of plants, the layout of pathways, and the placement of seating areas all contribute to the overall experience. A contemplative garden is not just visually appealing, but it also engages all our senses, allowing us to fully immerse ourselves in the present moment.

## Digging Deeper: The Art of Contemplative Gardening

by Michael Parker (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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## The Benefits of Contemplative Gardening

Engaging in contemplative gardening offers numerous benefits for our mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Here are some of the key advantages:

### 1. Stress Relief:

Gardening has been proven to reduce stress levels and promote relaxation. The act of digging, planting, and nurturing plants helps to shift our focus away from our worries and anxieties, allowing us to find a sense of calm and inner peace.

### 2. Mindfulness:

By practicing mindfulness in the garden, we learn to be fully present in the moment. The rhythmic actions of gardening, such as weeding or watering plants, can serve as anchors to keep our attention grounded in the present and away from distracting thoughts.

### 3. Connection with Nature:

Gardening provides an opportunity to reconnect with nature and experience its healing power. Spending time outdoors, surrounded by greenery and fresh air,

allows us to appreciate the beauty of creation and foster a sense of harmony with the natural world.

#### **4. Creative Expression:**

Contemplative gardening allows us to express our creativity through the design and arrangement of elements in the garden. It provides a space for experimentation and self-expression, where we can create a personalized sanctuary that reflects our aesthetic preferences and unique vision.

#### **5. Spiritual Growth:**

A contemplative garden can become a place for spiritual growth and self-discovery. It offers a sanctuary for introspection and meditation, where we can explore our inner thoughts, reflect on life's deeper questions, and find answers that may elude us in our busy lives.

### **Tips for Creating a Contemplative Garden**

Here are some tips to help you create your own contemplative garden:

#### **1. Choose Meaningful Plants:**

Select plants that hold personal significance or have symbolic meanings. This could be based on their color, scent, or cultural associations. The presence of these plants will enhance the contemplative experience and create a deeper connection with your garden.

#### **2. Create Secluded Spaces:**

Designate areas in your garden where you can retreat for solitude and reflection. These spaces can be simple seating areas, benches, or even a small meditation corner. By creating secluded spaces, you can carve out moments of stillness and introspection within your garden.

### 3. Incorporate Water Features:

Water features such as fountains, ponds, or streams add a soothing element to the garden. The gentle sound of flowing water can help create a calming atmosphere that promotes relaxation and tranquility.

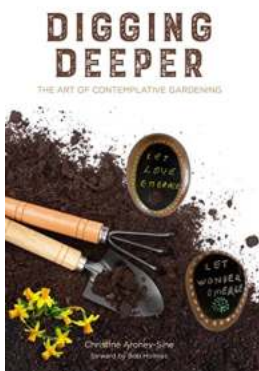
### 4. Use Natural Materials:

When designing your garden, opt for natural materials such as stone, wood, or gravel. These materials have an inherent organic quality that contributes to the overall harmonious ambiance of a contemplative garden.

### 5. Embrace Simplicity:

Avoid clutter and maintain a sense of simplicity in your garden design. Minimalism allows the mind to relax and focus on the present moment without being overwhelmed by excessive visual stimuli.

Contemplative gardening invites us to cultivate not only the plants in our gardens but also our own being. It offers a space for self-reflection, mindfulness, and spiritual nourishment. By engaging in this art form, we can create garden sanctuaries that serve as reminders of the beauty and interconnectedness of life.



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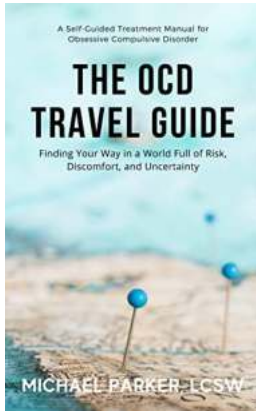
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About ten years ago I began creating small indoor container gardens that sat on my desktop as an aid to prayer and reflection. These contemplative gardens began as a way to create markers to help me enter into the liturgical calendar, but they increasingly became a way of life for me, providing a new technique for stirring my creativity, ordering my life, and deepening my spirituality. Sometimes my creations are inspired by the changing seasons of the liturgical calendar; at others, they grow out of the life situations that tug at my heartstrings either with joy or with sorrow. They increasingly give me joy and peace both in their creation and in their use, calling me to listen to the promptings of the spirit both within me and in the world around me.

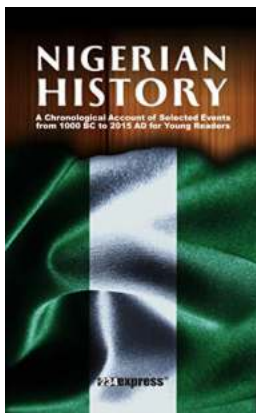
In the first section of the book, I explore liturgical gardens and the ways they invite us to reimagine our spiritual practices for the seasons of the church calendar. Advent and Lent gardens in particular have brought new meaning to these seasons of waiting. Christmas and Easter gardens have intensified my joy in the story of God revealed in Jesus Christ. I have even created Epiphany and Pentecost gardens, more transient in their season but still important in their focus.

In the second section, my gardens and the meditations they give rise to revolve around scriptures or seasonal themes that have beckoned to me out of the joys and pains of my life and of the world around me. The Australian bushfires and the pandemic both featured heavily in my gardens during 2020. Others have scriptures like Psalm 91, and phrases impressed on me during times of discernment as their theme. These have all provided rich material for seasonal gardens the array of which continues to grow as I recognize how deeply meditating on my gardens can connect me more intimately to God.



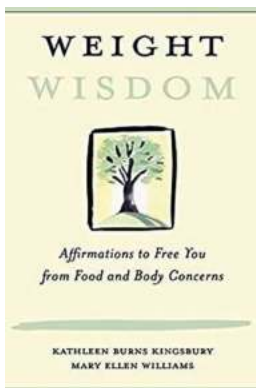
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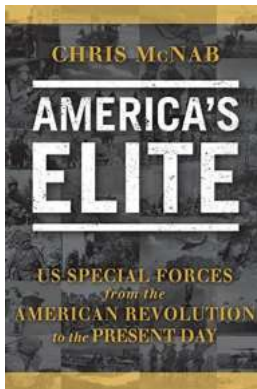
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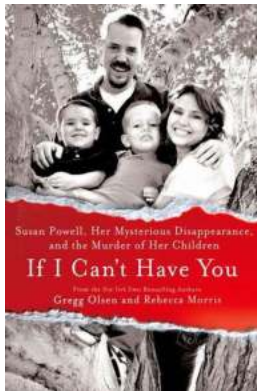
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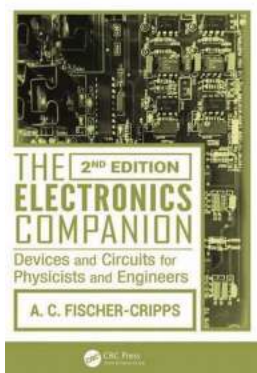
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