



There's a Bee In My Begonias

Garden Paths and Prayers

BERNADETTE
MCCARVER SNYDER

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A Rose Is a Rose Is a Strawberry?

The rose family is a wild and crazy one—maybe even more confusing than mine or yours! Since the name *rose* comes from the Latin word for “red,” you might first think of those lush red long-stemmed beauties or the bright red summer bloomers that climb over a backyard fence—but that’s just the beginning. Roses are like our own “extended” families. They come in many colors, sizes, and shapes. Some grow in hothouses; others wander wildly across fields, scramble through hedges, or make themselves at home in your own backyard. And some have only a slight family resemblance—like the flower of the strawberry plant. Yes, believe it or not, the strawberry also belongs to the rose family.

Roses even wander beyond the garden! You can find them in art museum paintings, on wall paper, wrapping paper, summer skirts and winter house shoes. And many have been given fanciful names like All That Jazz, Chrysler Imperial, Popcorn, and Empress Josephine.

Napoleon’s Empress Josephine was famous for her rose gardens and *always* carried a fresh rose with her. Can you guess why? She held the rose over her mouth when she smiled—to hide her bad teeth! (Guess they didn’t have a friendly family dentist in her day.)

Thank you, Lord, for all the wild and crazy families—of roses and of people. Thank you, too, for dentists and the wonderful person who invented the dentists’ painkilling novocaine. You know, Lord, that I’m afraid of painful surprises, from the dentist or from a rose thorn in my bouquet of days. Yet I know others have much worse pains to face. Help them, Lord. And help me to be braver on those days when a rose is a rose is a thorn.





The King's Flower

When I was growing up in Tennessee, irises grew in everybody's backyard and we called them flags. Kids brought bouquets of them to teachers, and irises were used to decorate the church altars. Walking to school, I passed an empty lot that was just full of all kinds of irises so this flower was too everyday for me to appreciate it.

Now I know that the iris was the symbol of the kings of France and this "flag" flew on their flags! Irises were on King Louis VII's banner during the Second French Crusade and were called fleur de Louis—which became the fleur-de-lis, which is sometimes used as a symbol for the city of St. Louis, which is where I live now! How about that!

The iris plant has been popular in many countries for many years. It was grown in early European gardens and was carved as a symbol on Egypt's famous Temple of Karnak near the Nile. And, back in the days when they wore powdered wigs (you may have seen someone wearing one in a movie), dried ground iris roots were used to produce violet-scented orris root which was used to powder those wigs! So—my "everyday" flower turns out not to be so "everyday" after all.

Here I am, found stupid again, Lord! Maybe it wasn't too bad for a kid to not get excited about an everyday flower called a flag even if it was as beautiful as the exotic orchid—but by now I should have wised up. Sorry to say, Lord, that I still sometimes take everyday miracles for granted—neglecting to get excited about a cool glass of water, fresh lettuce for my salad, sunshine for my morning, rain for my garden, and everyday friends that are beautiful though not always exotic. Send up the flag, Lord, and this time, I'll salute.





You Are My Sunshine

Mary, Mary, never contrary, how does your garden grow? A pretty little yellow flower that is a regular in many gardens got its name from “Mary’s gold” because it has long been associated with Mary, the mother of Jesus—possibly because the marigold loves the sun as Mary loved the Son. A gardener’s delight, the humble little marigold is easy to grow—and never contrary. It holds its head up and smiles at the noonday sun while other plants are wilting away, begging for some shade and a drink of water.

Did you know the original European marigold was once called “calendula” from a Latin word that meant “the first day of the month”? That’s because it bloomed *every* month of the year in some monastery gardens and constantly supplied flowers to decorate the church altars.

Lord, I’m sorry to say that, unlike the marigold, I am one of the wilters. Sometimes I will boldly make a statement, full of vim and vigor—but the moment someone challenges me about my “facts,” I begin to falter and question. Did I really remember the right quote or the proper date or who said what when? Even when I’m sure I know what I’m talking about, I sometimes have to take a step back before I take a step forward. Oh, I know you know I’m not always right and I should be willing to admit that but when I am right, I should be willing to admit that too! So help me, Lord, to get my head better organized so I can be sure of what I’m going to say before I’ve said it. Then, instead of wilting, I can be a marigold and hold my head up to the sun—and the Son—and smile.





The Teary-Eyed Fritillary

The frilly fritillary produces nodding flower bells in an unusual variety of patterns, sizes, and shapes. Unlike most flowers, these blossoms are often striped, speckled, or checkered in a range of watercolor hues. And if you touch a petal, it will sometimes weep a small “tear” from the reservoir of nectar that is at the base of each petal.

The plants range from the bold, imposing crown imperial which produces a garland of bright blossoms on tall, strong stalks to a small, dainty woodland species that has single modest flowers on slim stems. But the one that interests me most is the guinea-hen fritillary which has a speckled pattern similar to the speckles of a guinea hen’s feathers. Now you might wonder how I know about a guinea hen’s feathers—so I’ll tell you.

When I was a kid, we often visited an aunt and uncle who lived on a farm. I remember the pies made from the cherries on their trees. And I remember the guineas. They seemed very exotic to me. And of course, we sometimes had roast guinea for dinner. I never forgot that because we *never* had roast guinea at home. Now I know the farm guinea is related to the fancy pheasant just like the guinea-hen fritillary is related to the imposing crown imperial fritillary. Whether fowls, flowers, or folks, family trees are amazing!

There are so many amazing family trees mentioned in the Bible, Lord—and my own tree has broad branches with distant cousins occasionally showing up to happily surprise me. If it hadn’t been for that one and only family farm connection, I never would have known about guineas and I wouldn’t have been so delighted to discover the guinea-hen fritillary. Thanks, Lord, for so many frilling surprises!





The Old Man's Beard

Now who would call a show-stopping fragrant flower an “old man’s beard?” This flower’s nickname must have come from the fact that the beautiful clematis flower has masses of feathery seed heads that evidently reminded some botanist of a beard!

Through the years, other botanists have had some other strange ideas about how to grow this spectacularly flowered plant. The clematis is a vine, but one botanist suggested that you “peg down” the vines so they would grow across the ground and fill flower beds. Another suggested you should let the clematis grow through and around a bush so it would look like you had thrown a “veil” over the bush.

The clematis survived the name and the suggestions and now vines happily on light posts, trellises, and mail boxes—and looks breathtakingly beautiful.

Lord, it seems lots of people always have “good” suggestions about how something or someone else should “grow”! They know just how you should decorate your house, raise your children, and grow your garden. Where do they get such a strange idea? What’s that you say, Lord? Well, okay, maybe I’m one of the ones who can sometimes be a little too generous with my advice. So help me, Lord, to stop throwing out veiled remarks—and some that are not so veiled—and then all my friends can be breathtakingly surprised.





How Could You Forget?

As Shakespeare said, "...rosemary—that's for remembrance." This flowering herb has many uses and is the subject of many legends. Because it is known as the herb of fidelity and remembrance, it has often been included in bridal bouquets *and* in funeral sprays. It has been used as a hair rinse and an air freshener and bunches of it were once burned to try to drive away the plague!

One of the most popular legends tells that when the Holy Family was fleeing into Egypt, Mary draped her blue cloak over a white flowering rosemary bush one night—and the next morning, the flowers had turned blue. There is still one type of rosemary with white flowers but most of them flower in shades of blue. That's the reason that this herb is also known as the pilgrim's plant.

Another legend says that the rosemary will never grow taller than a man and will never live longer than thirty-three years, the number of years Christ lived on earth.

But the idea that caught my attention was that you could weave a garland of rosemary and wear it in your hair to improve your memory. If I did that, maybe I could better remember names, dates, appointments, and the need to pick up milk and bread at the grocery before I casually head home to read a book.

Yes, Lord, I am easily distracted so I often say to myself, "How could you forget that?" I guess you say that a lot too, Lord, when I forget to say a single prayer on a busy day or neglect to send a get-well or sympathy card to one of your suffering children. Sorry, Lord, I'll try to do better. In fact, I'll start today. I'll go out and buy a rosemary plant so I'll have it ready ahead of time to give as a gift to someone who needs one—if I remember.





Sweet Surprise

The plant in my patio garden that is the prettiest, showiest, most healthy—and most aggravating—is one I did *not* plant. Some visiting bird must have dropped some seeds a few years ago and, to my surprise, I suddenly had some lovely colorful wild sweet peas growing where they had not been expected.

I was so pleased when they started blooming and spreading all over the place. Everyone oohed and aahed at their beauty. And the next year, without me doing a thing, they reappeared and were beautiful again but this time they had reseeded themselves so efficiently that they took over, crowding out all the other plants. I tried to train them up a trellis and they cooperated but that didn't stop them from continuing to grow under the trellis, under the fence, and over the sidewalk. Finally I had to start pulling up the vines and discarding them by the bagful.

Ever since, this wild sweet pea and I have had a love-hate relationship. I love the flowers and there are always plenty to bring in the house for bouquets when nothing else is blooming, but I have to protect my other plants from getting smothered. So what's a gardener to do!

Actually, Lord, I think I feel closer to this plant than any other because I also have been known to go for too much of a good thing. My hall is filled with framed pictures of so many relatives, I'm afraid the plaster may give up and cave in some day. When company comes, I might fix two desserts instead of one and I sometimes wear three kinds of beads when one would do just fine. Like the sweet pea, I start out okay but then go wild and get carried away—so help me to learn, Lord, that sometimes less is best.

