

## A Garden's Grace

Dan Hardison

Large or small, gardens provide a place of beauty, meditation, and inspiration. For those who work in the garden – there is a closeness with God. As The Rev. George W. Jones said, “good gardeners and good Christians have much in common – great faith in God.”

“Though garden design ranks with the finest of arts, a garden is among the most ephemeral of art forms,” Rick Darke, horticulturist, author and photographer, has written. “The garden is a unique conjunction of art, living elements, and human events that take place in its embrace, and it has a unique ability to heal, enlighten, and inspire.”

Planting a garden has been compared to painting a landscape with living things. Just as an artistic touch can be found in the design of the garden, the work of artists can be found within the garden in the form of sculpture, fountains, hand-wrought gates, mosaics, and even in the brickwork of walkways and walls. But the greatest work of art found in the garden is God's own handiwork – flowers.

In what seems to be a never-ending variety of shapes, sizes, and color, flowers bring unending beauty to the garden. But the role of flowers does not end within the garden, flowers are used to adorn the inside of our homes, churches, and even places of business to enhance not only the beauty of the space, but also to provide an uplifting experience to all who enter. As Sharon Sheridan pointed out in a story for *Episcopal Life*, flower arranging is an art in itself.

Gardens can be any of a variety of styles – from gardens specializing in roses or orchids, to an English garden of shrubs, to the simplicity of a Japanese garden, to a woodland garden. Nor is space a problem. A container garden on a porch or patio can still provide a sense of contentment and enjoyment.

Long have gardens been used to bring peace, enjoyment, and wonder to those who enter. “These are indeed some of the fruits of

time spent in a Quiet Garden, contemplating the beauty of the world around,” writes Jackie Locke, Administrative Director of the Quiet Garden Movement, “be it in a small backyard, a prairie, a vast forest, or a church memorial garden. It is an opportunity to be attentive, to hear God speaking and to respond, to leave refreshed and ready to engage with the world again.”

### *Along the Path*

Cheekwood Botanical Garden - Nashville, Tennessee  
Photo by Dan Hardison

