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Contemplating a garden in all its beauty

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I'm a gardener. I love to dig in the dirt: turn compost piles, double dig garden plots, replace lawn with new beds. For several years, I've been slowly replacing the grass of our front terrace with perennials because the pitch is steep and it is harder and harder to mow.

The other thing I love about the garden is its promise. The buds on fruit trees and the first shoots of spring bulbs delight me and fill me with hope for results I initiated years ago but really have done very little to accomplish. It's the garden's promise that gets me every time.

I stand enraptured by the green apricots on the branch and the tomato buds on the vine. I get out of the car, transfixed by the first fuchsia bee balm petals and the orange, yellow, white, pink and deep red lilies bursting from bud to flower. Two years ago, our community garden headquarters got a late donation of hundreds of varieties of daylilies that they sold cheap to us members. My 20 or so plants of many colors are spreading and will have to be divided this fall. For now, I watch their buds develop, imagining the profusion to come. And then there's the crepe myrtle, the sage, the hibiscus, the aster, the mums -- none of which have even begun to form their buds.

I lose myself in my garden. It catches my heart over and over, a dozen times a day, untold minutes at a time. I'm not planning autumn's work: what to plant and how to space it. I'm not eyeing the weeds to pull them or the heavy sugar snap peas to pick them. I'm just looking.

This is contemplation. It is not quite the same as a planned time of sitting, attempting to send darts of love into the cloud of unknowing. I don't choose the time. The beauty of the moment chooses me. It is born of my intimate knowledge of these plants, reminding me of Ephesians 1:4, that before the creation of the world we were chosen in love, to stand before God holy and spotless.

I'm not thinking of Ephesians when I look at my garden. I'm not thinking of anything. My mind is stilled and my heart is open.

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