

# Tips for Deeper Gardening

*Gardening to live life to the full*

**1. Winter is Wonderful** – embrace this time of stillness in the garden. See the opportunity it gives for quiet reflection on the ‘bones’ of the garden – its shape, its size, its underlying structure. These three qualities will not be so readily apparent in other seasons but they are what gives the garden its essential character. Every garden needs a time to rest and recuperate and so do we. How do we ensure the season of winter in our own lives? Do we take time to be still, reflect and review?

**2. The Sun and its life-giving trail** – follow the shadows and plot the way the sun blazes a trail through your garden. This gives your garden its opportunities and also influences your behaviour. Noticing this trail will determine where and when your coolest and warmest spots are. This will help you to place the right sort of plant in the right sort of place. We also respond to warmth and light rather like plants – noticing this trail for ourselves may determine the best place to locate a new patio or bench.

If we talk about the sun, we must also talk about time. Your garden is a simple sundial. Take a look at your garden right now and the sun will be creating the same light and darker areas in six months time. What will be the difference between then and now? Our efforts! Gardening links us to the true nature of time – cycles and rhythms, seen through the emergence, flowering, leaf-drop and dying of our crops, plants and trees. Death in the garden leads to renewal – old plant matter rots down into life-giving compost; gaps in the border lead to new possibilities. When we understand this, we can see the path of our own lives in similar, natural ways.

**3. Which way does your garden face?** Understand the special qualities that are brought to your garden because of its orientation. An east-facing garden has a very different set of possibilities than a west-facing one. We will behave differently in our gardens than our neighbours on the other side of the street simply because the path of the sun will cast a different set of shadows through our gardens.

**4. The soil – the nourishing carpet beneath our feet.** Soil is everything, it will determine the health and longevity of your plants. It also determines the palette of plants that will grow well there – acidic or alkaline, sandy or clayey. Get to know deeply your soil and nurture it well. It is the foundation on which everything else rests. Give your soil a good start by getting a compost bin to recycle your organic waste from the kitchen and garden.

In our own lives, our soil (our foundation) is our experiences turned over and forked through into the goodness of wisdom and learning. How well do we break down the big clods to prepare a good soil? What tools do we bring to the digging? What tools do we bring to our own learning and processing, breaking down the bigger problems into manageable chunks? Do we have all the tools we need? Is the soil of our own lives able to support the seeds and crops of wishes, desires and responsibilities that we have? Get digging!

**5. Water – our deepest relationship.** Water is the trigger for life, too – the presence of water can germinate the tiniest seed in the darkest place to reach upwards towards the light and fulfil its potential. How well do we keep our seeds and crops (our ideas, goals, desires, responsibilities) watered?

Honour the life-giving properties of water. Conserve it well and use it appropriately. Scarcity of water is an invitation for us to re-attach value to this precious commodity. Do all you can to prevent water loss (through rainfall capture, mulching, watering at appropriate times, for example) and garden according to water availability, this is our new reality.

*So, what is a garden? A place where we can reconnect with the world and each other; where we can learn about our lives and where we can become truly more loving and powerful.*

*Mark Rendell*

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