

LEMONADE UNDER A TABEBUIA

As every gardener knows, planting seeds in the springtime can be an enriching experience. Cultivating the young seedling that has sprouted, watching it grow and bloom, harvesting the fruit—it's all part of the process.

When you've had a tiring day working that spring garden or even when the first days of the summer doldrums set in, take a break. Grab a frosty lemonade and head for the flowery shade of a tabebuia tree. If you are lucky, the flower carpet under foot will be just as spectacular as the umbrella above. Cover your glass, though, unless you want a purple petal in your lemonade.

Sometimes, Mother Nature will even keep you from getting out in the garden for a period. Some gardeners use that time to catch up on housework or pay bills, but I prefer taking a different path during downtimes, whether it's from Mother Nature or just a need to take a break from the physical work. That other path involves planting and harvesting of a sort, too. Of course, I'm talking about planting and reaping within the mind. The

beauty of gardening within the mind is that you can do it anywhere in any kind of weather at any age. There is no better way (at least according to the polls that I've taken recently) to garden within the mind than by absorbing the wisdom of stories and tales from the garden.

If it's too hot, take a volume of stories and tales from the garden with you to the shade of that tabebuia. Don't have a tabebuia? — it's okay. Any good collection works equally well under a live oak or even a fiery maple in the fall. If it's too cold, cozy up in front of a crackling fire. If your airline flight is taking you over the Pacific Ocean, relax and start planting.

With the garden stories and tales in our collection, you are sure to be greatly inspired, mildly entertained, or at least, in a real stretch, modestly challenged. Its flowers go from humor to exaggeration to silliness to curiosity to history to wisdom to eternal truths.

Let me be clear—you will gain little in the way of pure scientific knowledge in consuming these stories. A vast field of resources resides in the internet world or in published technical works that convey such knowledge. But the spirit of gardening

transcends scientific names, soil science, entomology, and plant anatomy. Step into the garden on a cool spring morning and watch for the resurrection of the first daffodil waking from its winter rest. Throw out some bird seed on new fallen snow and see the bird tracks of cardinals, bluebirds, or goldfinches. Taste a fresh-picked, juicy apple from the tree in your backyard. Marvel at the color show that nature puts on in the fall. These comprise the spirit of gardening.

Regarding the relationship between the human spirit and the gardening spirit, allow me to quote the legendary farmer, Oliver Wendell Douglas of Green Acres fame, (you'll have to supply your own fife) "I came out here to get away from the rat race of the city. Out here where I could breathe the pure air, work the fertile soil. Where a man can plant his seeds and watch 'em shoot upwards toward the sun and the sky, like our forefathers did. The farmer's the backbone of America. It's his gnarled hands, aching back that gives America its great strength."

Choosing a good title is an important part of any literary endeavor. Some say the title should

give a clear picture and brief one-line synopsis of the body. Others say the title should be subtle and challenge the reader to find the title's meaning in the body. Some will even try to use both strategies in the title (I, for one, do not employ this technique). Let us dig a little deeper into the meaning of *Lemonade Under a Tabebuia*, the title of this story.

'Lemonade' is obviously a refreshing beverage made from lemons. What else do we know about lemonade? Well ... there's ... uh ... there's the old cliché applied to difficult situations, 'make lemonade out of lemons'. And then there's ... well ... uh ... okay, 'Under' is a preposition indicating where you would drink the lemonade. It is the correct choice here, because you certainly wouldn't drink a lemonade while on a tree or in a tree. 'A' is an indefinite article indicating a single Tabebuia tree. Obviously, you couldn't drink a lemonade under multiple trees. Finally, we have 'Tabebuia'—an abbreviated form of 'tacyba bebuya', a name from the Brazilian Tupi people meaning 'ant wood'. So, put it all together and we have *Lemonade Under a Tabebuia*. By applying deductive reasoning, it can only mean ... well ... uh ... it

certainly would seem to ... uh ... undoubtedly, it conveys ... uh ... oh, never mind. Perhaps we should not over-analyze here. Continued digging could result in inane ramblings that have no relevance to the body of work.

I suppose that I should wax more serious now. So, will the gardens now flourishing across this globe ever stop putting forth blooms? Most certainly they will not—God is the ultimate gardener, and whenever He decides it's time for a change, I believe whatever He has in store will have a garden, probably more beautiful than anything we can imagine.

Will the tiny garden at my house ever stop putting forth blooms? Most probably it will not either—there will come a time for me, like everyone else on this planet, when my hands will no longer be able to hold a shovel or a hoe. Maybe someone else can do the physical work and I can just enjoy their labor. Maybe it will never look like the gardens I have had in the past, and maybe it will be overrun with weeds, but as Bil Keane said in *Family Circus*, “Some weeds try to fool you by having flowers.”

If you feel, after absorbing the garden stories and tales in The Collection's *Gardening à la carte*, that the harvest is worth more than the mental ache that might come as a side effect, then rejoice in the fact that the planting will continue producing harvests with more of the same (at least until God assigns me to another garden elsewhere).

So, here's to fertile minds and bountiful harvests of wisdom.

Marcus Meyer

Continued partaking of such material has not been proven to cause any long-term ill effects—I don't think ... but then, no one living has actually been exposed to it long enough for any reliable scientific conclusion.