

Lessons in the Garden

from Carol Lugg

[from issue 80 -- Fall 2002 -- of PA HOMESCHOOLERS newsletter]

"Put your books away, Eric. We're going to work in the garden today."

"Whoopee! I don't have to do school today. Yeah, ta-dum- dee, whoopee!"

"Eric, these are the plants I don't want in my garden. This plant becomes invasive so I want to keep it under control."

"What's invasive?"

"Invasive is when something starts to take over and you don't want it in your garden. This plant was starting to squeeze out plants I do want to spread, so it's invasive because it invades the other plant's growing space. Do you have anything invasive in your bedroom?"

"No."

"How about your lego's, Eric? Aren't they kind of taking over your room and squeezing out room for your football guys?"

"Yea, but I like them being invasive. Hey look, Mom, I found a flower with petals hiding under here. It has five petals."

"Why don't you pull the petals off, put them in two piles saying, 'I love you' for one petal and 'I love you' not for another petal?"



"I love you."

"I love you not"

"I love you."

"I love you not."

"I LOVE YOU!"

"I love you too, Eric! When you have one left over when putting things into two equal piles, you have an odd number. Are you piles even?"

"No"

"Then you have an odd number. Five is an odd number. "

"Can I go find some other flowers and sort the petals to see if I have odd or even numbers?"

"Sure!"

[A pleasant 5 minutes of silence where I think about how I should have better researched this plant before putting it in my garden.]

"Mom, I found one odd flower and one even flower. When I went to pull this flower off, the whole plant came out."

"Oooooo, Eric, we need to put that plant back into the garden or it will die."

"Why?"

"Plants need water to live and plants get water from the soil. You go get the sprinkling can and fill it with some water and meet me at the spot where you pulled this out."

[Three minutes of silence where I am thinking about how some day they will be grown and gone and I won't have anyone around to pull out my flowers.]

"Got the water, Mom."

"Let's stick her back in the hole."

"Are flowers girls?"



"No, Eric. I just called it a girl. Sometimes we call boats and ships by girls names, but I don't remember why we do that."

"Look, Mom, our flower is sagging now."

"We call that wilted. W...W...wilted. What letter does that start with?"

"Oh, Mom, that's easy - F!"

"Guess we better work on that one. Let's go back and finish our weeding."

[Each of working. Eric is singing a nonsense song that goes something like this....W...ta da dum....like wall...ta da dum.....W..... ta da dum...like whale and willy and wum..ta da dum.

I am absorbed in my own guilty thoughts about how I haven't worked with Eric like I did his older siblings. Maybe my mother-in-law is right, I can't keep up.....]

"Mom, look at this ant. It is carrying this huge dead spider."

"Ants are amazing little creatures. I've always been fascinated with these little guys. We should get a book from the library and read about them".

"Can we go today and get one?"

"If we have time I suppose we could run in after I drop your brother off at track."

"Mom?"

"Yes?"

"I'm glad I'm not doing school today."

"Me, too, Eric. Me too."

I read this to my Garden Club and they just stared at me. I thought perhaps this audience would appreciate it more. For those of you who wonder why I write these thoughts from time to time, I will tell you. I wanted my kids to write. I read, in more than one place, that if you want your kids to write, they need to see you write. If you want your kids to read, they need to see you read. Well, I decided to start writing. My kids are writing. Now, what I can't figure out is - I weed in my garden at least weekly and my kids see me weed. Now, why, oh why, aren't they weeding?

