

## Author's Note

Simone Weil, the twentieth-century theologian, once said the only real question to be asked of another is "What are you going through?" It struck me when I read those words that here was another person fascinated with my favorite fundamental question: how does one manage with what one has been dealt?

My ability to manage in the world gradually ripened through my love of plants. Gardening became my absorbing passion, plants my teachers and best friends. Taking care of plants soothed me when life was difficult and invigorated me on an average or good day.

One of my life's struggles has been to discover my calling, to find a purpose in whatever I did. Gradually it dawned on me that I could write and speak publicly about what mattered to me most. I could tell the truth about what I learned about myself and my life through gardening.

When I first started writing down my love story with

plants, I was simply writing what I knew, what was important to me. Then, as I reached out in talks and in the media, I began to realize that there were other people who felt deep levels of love and connection when they gardened or allowed themselves to just "be" with the natural world. These people practiced what I call inner gardening: they had relationships with trees and other plants.

Some of them felt silly admitting the existence of this relationship. Husbands laughed at them or wives told them that they were crazy. They didn't dare mention such a thing at gardening-club meetings or to neighbors over the back fence. These people learned to keep their mouths shut and their feelings a secret—except from their fellow inner gardeners. *Growing Myself* is my offering to help those trapped in this closet to come out. And to others who have never considered the possibility of approaching gardening through a relationship with plants, I hope to awaken you to a way of being in the world that brings enormous happiness and great beauty.

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