

## GARDEN PLEASURES



Some people say that ‘God is in the garden.’ The garden offers that little piece of space and tranquillity for reflection and calm. It can also be a place for enjoying a glass of wine on a hot, toasty summer night staring at the stars with the love of your life (as I remember my first summer in our then new home).

In the concreted gardens for driveways and increasingly urbanised landscape of sprawling cities eating up the greenbelts, I relish in the joy of relaxing in my garden and recuperating from modern day stresses. It offers an alternative to hellish road-raged traffic commutes across an ever increasingly sky-scraped, crowded city with yet more sky-high flats concealing the landscape. I like to see the sky without ‘craning my neck’. I also wonder what architects are thinking when they build these matchbox dwellings without outdoor space. A balcony or roof garden would be welcome and humanise such living spaces.

I remember being given a copy of the book, ‘The Secret Garden’ as a child, and being thrilled by the description of the garden in the book. It was like going on an adventure without stepping outside. I can still picture the lush greenness of that garden from that read so long ago.

The garden, for me, offers the alternative to a holiday – without stressing in an airport lounge, being herded around, or waiting for a train and hoping it won’t be cancelled. There is also the joy of being surrounded by living things – life itself. Planting seeds and watching life unfold as the plants grow. For me, the garden also helps me to stay ‘grounded’ and connected to the world around me and shows how, by simple nurturing, the best can be made of each individual living thing and vice versa. It also shows how little is needed to create greatness. For example a colossal tree can be grown from a tiny seed with water and the right place in the garden. It’s like finding one’s own niche in life where one can flourish. When an individual has a talent and it is placed in or guided to the right environment and given the encouragement and direction under the right conditions they too, as a flower is pleasing to the senses, can enrich the world we live in. It is things like this that I learn from gardening.

The other thing that I love about my garden is that it can be a private space. In the increasingly sci-fi horror ‘big brother’ style world that we are living in with cameras everywhere it is nice to have some private space to relax outdoors where I can revert to the primeval instinct in myself to hide away from danger. There just seems something predatory about someone wanting to watch (voyeuristically or otherwise) other people all the time. After watching the film ‘I Robot’ which explores the idea that those entrusted to watch over us sometimes abuse the omniscient power that they have and just wondering what might happen if the wrong type of person were to suddenly have access to all this information, one suddenly feels like a trapped bird in a cage being guarded by carnivorous hunters gathering firewood for the feast! So occasionally, it is a relief to get away from

the glaring cameras, put my sunglasses on and smile up at the satellite snooping down on me. At least I have some privacy in the garden.

The other aspect of my garden that I love is how it excites my eyes. There is that special uplifting feeling of well-being that I get from looking at something truly beautiful that is priceless. It is the price that I would be willing to pay if I could afford a Monet painting, for example.

The garden also creates a boundary between ones own space and another's where a personal 'Eden' can be created. It is where we can go to be still and be more perceptive, to have a clear mind, to be nearer to our creator and where by planting, tending, and nurturing we can understand more our creator by seeing how it is to be creative and in some instances destructive because we want our garden to be a certain way.

Attending church on a Sunday, for me, can sometimes give me a similar experience to being in my garden. The sermon and readings teach me about life from others' as my garden teaches me from my observations. Church is a place where I can be calm and tranquil through prayer similar to my garden being a thinking space, except that the plants that have been nurtured and the thriving conditions are replaced by people who are being nurtured by their faith.

And I guess that where today people reach out for their religion in many different ways, for example football, the ever-changing fickle fashion shopping scene, the weekly magazine 'fix' to worship the film or media idols, unlike these other forms of worship, I find that enjoying my garden rather like my faith does not leave me with an empty constant insatiability. I am not still feeling in need of another consumer item or consumer experience leaving me feeling poorer. Yes, I enjoy watching the occasional battle on the football pitch (usually the world cup), and sometimes buying an item of clothing because I think it is genuinely beautiful (not because last week's fashion has moved on), but it still doesn't beat that feeling from my garden, which costs very little. It costs just some passion, a packet of seeds and some vision and imagination.

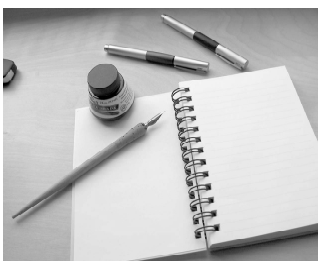
## **Deli Vinyo Buckley-Keogh**

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**There are many ways to do it  
and many places where you may feel inspired to do it  
and many of you who can and should do it!**



ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY RUGGIO



**What is it?  
Writing something for Magna  
your parish magazine.  
We are waiting to read!**

