



Life
Gardener

SEED, PLANT AND GROW
YOUR FULL BLOOM LIFE

LYNDAL EDWARDS

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LifeGardener: Seed, Plant & Grow Your Full Bloom Life

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For Olwyn, the grandmother
tree shading our family.

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PROLOGUE

TRUTHSEED

n.

An idea or sense which, when held in your heart and mind, begins to germinate and calls to be planted deep in the soil of your life.

I recently planted a TruthSeed.

I don't want or need more of anything new.

I don't want to go higher or further, just deeper... have deeper relationships and more enriched experiences both within myself and in my life.

I know how to drive hard and fast to achieve just about anything, but I no longer want to be driven by others.

I don't feel a need to always 'shine', I just want to be more fully and freely the un-glossy, earthy me. And I know deep in the soil of my soul that whenever I allow myself to naturally, organically bloom – even just for a moment – so does my life.

I've come to realise my life is a garden, full of life, colour, fragrance and beauty. It's impacted by the weather – both my moods and my circumstances – and changes with the seasons.

There are times when I need to remove unwanted weeds in my work, relationships, or attitude, sift through what matters and compost the rest.

When I grew curious about this life-as-a-garden concept, a simple TruthSeed sprouted in my heart and mind: if my life really is a garden, and I consciously choose to be the Gardener, what might grow?

What would happen if I started to take responsibility for the persistent weeds? What if I began digging deeper into the soil beneath and looking at the quality of my choices and my life?

I began to cultivate a sense of curiosity for the deeper and richer layers of my life. What if, instead of trying to control situations and outcomes in my world, I began to cultivate and seed change and growth from inside myself?

What if, instead of doubting my decisions, I could trust myself, as the cultivator of my life, to take my natural next steps? What if I planted my actions from a place of authenticity, rooted in what matters to me?

What if I could compost my past to feed my future, turning hard-won lessons into fertile ground for self-love, self-growth and powerful change both within me and around me?

This book was seeded, planted and grown from that soil – an innate desire to savour the nectar of life’s joys, plant powerful intention seeds and live my life with my feet not just firmly planted on the ground, but deeply rooted in what I know to be powerful and true.

What I know to be powerful and true is organic and continues to grow and strengthen its roots, as I am constantly blooming. I find freedom in this. Once upon a time, I saw a change of mind, or heart, or life direction as irresponsible and unreliable.

The wisdom of ageing has shown me my nature is as ever-changing and dynamic as nature and life itself. Personal evolution, the shedding, weeding and composting of our past to plant the natural next step and grow whatever is emerging, is wild, natural, and inevitable.

The blooming of ourselves and our life is beautiful and painful and deeply rich, especially if we choose to stay present to as much of it as we can bear at the time. As surely as the leaves colour and drop in autumn, we too drop and release what no longer serves us as a natural falling away.

Perhaps the most beautiful revelation is that the things my soul most longs for are profoundly simple and have remained unchanged my whole life.

In September 2021, while sifting and sorting the soil of my dreams, desires and longings, I – quite by accident, but with a heartfelt intention – unearthed seven of these SoulSeeds.

As I pulled into my driveway on a September Thursday morning, I asked myself, “In all this busyness and buzz of your life right now, in all the struggle you’re feeling (once again) in your solar plexus and stiffened neck, what are you really longing for?”

My soul answered quickly, giving me just enough time to take notes:

“Hey, thanks for asking me instead of your head. Actually, my needs are simple. What I long for, what you have longed for all your adult life is: grace and ease (instead of stress and struggle); deeper relationships; to live with meaning and purpose; a deep and beautiful nature connection; a daily devotion to self-nourishment; strength of body and mind; and soulitude (alone time without the mind chatter).”

Surely there was more to it than this. These desires seemed too basic, too common, too unambitious. Then I real-eyesed. These aren't goals or projects to be seeded and planted, they are SoulSeeds crying out to be recognised as significant enough (as simple as they are), to be at the very centre of my LifeGarden.

In the days that followed, more SoulSeed insights fell onto my journal pages. This is the essence of what my soul asked of me:

- ✿ I want to live each day with grace and ease, to welcome the day, and for you to carry that grace and ease into as many present moments as you can.
- ✿ I want deeper, more heartfelt connections with those you love, taking the time to listen with your whole self and bringing a richness to each and every connection.
- ✿ I want you to live life with a richer meaning and purpose, releasing the pettiness and negativity, and showing up as your most powerful change-making self.
- ✿ I want you to lose and find yourself in deep nature connection, let nature heal and inspire you, and hunger to intimately know your wilder nature.
- ✿ I want you to listen well to what you need and desire, to your intuition as a guide to deeper truth, and to self-nourish as a devotion and practice
- ✿ I want you to build strength, of body and mind – so you can embrace your true power as a cultivator of powerful change in your life and the world.
- ✿ I want you to give yourself the soulitude you need to clear your mind and rejoice in your creativity, joy and inner Goddess.

I listened.

Listening saw me reject two busy work projects just weeks later.

Listening led me back to loving myself, those beautiful people around me – who'd been watching my recent work struggle – and those passion projects closest to my heart, including this book.

Listening helped me finish this book, to soften its heart, deepen its roots and bring the fragrance of truth and beauty I was longing to gift to you.

I am deeply grateful for these recent gifts and the generous, eternal blossoming of this simple life-as-a-garden metaphor.

I feel ripe and ready to share its power, magic and wisdom with you.

INTRODUCTION

LOCKDOWN BLOOM

My desire to write this book had been budding for years, but came into bloom in the spring of 2020, as we emerged from the first Covid-19 lockdown. Many things were lost or changed around the world during the global pandemic, including livelihoods and lives.

Everyone has a Covid-19 story to tell. My family's story is more fortunate than most. Our only real loss was control, and what grew inside me was confirmation that when nothing seems to be going to plan it's time to stop controlling and start cultivating.

As the Covid numbers and fear intensified around the world, I felt a strange liberation budding in my own heart and mind. Within this newfound time and space – quiet streets, cafes and highways – this life-as-a-garden idea was seeded and profoundly and irrevocably changed how I viewed, experienced and lived my life.

When the world seems to be tilting a little too far on its axis, and world leaders are polarising when they should be unifying, the natural reaction is to panic and tighten our grip. When we can't control what's happening 'out there', the temptation is to try to control what's going on 'in here' inside ourselves, our family and our community. What I noticed was the women around me were growing tired of holding on tight, of struggling for control of their lives.

Keeping all the balls in the air, juggling the demands of motherhood, of partnership, friendship and work is not only exhausting, it's distracting. When we're busy watching the balls in the air, there's no time or energy to see and give attention to the things that really matter in our heart, our soul, our world.

I hear so many women say they're frustrated and disheartened by the state of the world – social injustice, war, inequality, homelessness, environmental collapse – but they're so tired and so busy they don't know how to change the small corners of their own life, let alone contribute to positive change around them.

Perhaps you feel this in yourself, or witness it in others – a frustration and despair at the growing parts of life and the world that can't be controlled. LifeGardening offered me what I'm now offering you: seeds of hope and a fresh, new, organic way of cultivating powerful and positive change in yourself, your life and the world around you.

An invitation to garden

This book is an invitation to stop juggling, put down the balls and pick up the spade. Stop overthinking your life and dig your hands deep into its soil. Take a look at what lies beneath that top layer, for it holds the truth of your deepest dreams and desires, your passions, the things that lay dormant a while, then wake you at 3am to tug on your conscience.

Stop overthinking life's choices and start digging with passion and earnestness to uncover your own roots, your truth, and the passion with which to grow your one precious LifeGarden.

More than a philosophy for living, LifeGardener is a down-to-earth, get-your-hands-dirty guide to help you:

- ✿ **Illuminate Your Truth** – Shine the light of truth on what's really growing and showing in your life.
- ✿ **Self-Nourish to Flourish** - Discover new energy from your roots to your tips when you move beyond what you need to survive to what you know will help you thrive.

- ✿ **Seed Your Intentions** - Feel the power shift that comes when you stop over-thinking and plant your powerful intention seeds with simple actions.
- ✿ **Start Weeding** - Find ways to stop whingeing and start weeding what's no longer working in your life.
- ✿ **Compost Your Past** – Awaken to the fact that the past, no matter how toxic or weed-filled, can feed and fertilise your future dreams and desires.
- ✿ **Grow Organic Goals** – plant organic goals that grow and change as you do, blossoming beyond your imagination.
- ✿ **Cultivate Your Power** – learn to cultivate all the time, energy and support you need to seed, plant and grow your Full Bloom Life.



I'm both grateful and excited you've picked up this book. I hope we can journey together right until the end. I don't take your time and attention for granted and my daily devotion as I wrote the book was to you, dear reader.

I know this might feel a little too familiar early on, but I've been so committed to showing up at the writing desk and sharing with you that I feel much closer to you than you will to me right now.

Now this book is in your hands, or on your device, you can, of course, read it in whatever way feels right for you, flicking through parts to pick and harvest as you please. However, to experience the full bloom potential of the book, I would invite you to read from front to back for two reasons:

- From the moment I sat to write, the book grew and blossomed as effortlessly as a morning rose opens. The 40,000 plus word bounty grew in just six beautiful spring weeks in (almost) the exact order you are about to read it.
- Secondly, each part unearths a new layer of the LifeGardener philosophy. You'll notice exercises at the end of some parts. Each of these get-your-hands-dirty exercises has been planted with the intention of both awakening your consciousness and deepening your experience of LifeGardening.

You can see this book as an opportunity to 'stop and smell the roses' for a few hours, then pop it back on the shelf to collect dust. Or you can open your heart and mind to the potential blossoming of a new way of seeing yourself, living in and loving your life.

LifeGardening is 3 things

It's a philosophy for living and an empowering new way of seeing your life come into full bloom. But it's also a simple process – the LifeGardening Cultivation Cycle – for manifesting and cultivating everything from small, powerful changes to your biggest dreams and most heartfelt desires.

Thirdly, LifeGardening is a set of get-your-hands-dirty tools that you can use to practically cultivate positive and powerful changes in your life. I'll be sharing these – Intention Seeding, Action Planting, Grounded Visioning, Harvesting – throughout the book.

There are a couple of basic gardening tools you'll be familiar with that will help you harvest your learnings. A journal or notepad of any kind and a pen is just about all you need.

My intention seeds

I want you to understand the very simple, yet deeply heartfelt intentions I am seeding in writing and sharing this book and powerful process with you.

- I want you to experience your power as the cultivator of your own life.
- I want to share TruthSeeds and ask you the blooming questions to grow and cultivate your curiosity.
- I want you to see, taste, smell and touch the divine nature of yourself and your LifeGarden.
- I want you to experience the freedom that begins to bloom when we seek and unearth self-truth, when we live our lives with our feet firmly planted in the soil of our soul's longing.
- I want you to tap into the root of true feminine power to create, to cultivate change, to bring your dreams and desires into bloom, and to help both yourself and those you love and care about flourish.
- And on a really practical level, I want you to feel the enjoyment that comes with living from a place of creative cultivation, rather than rigid control.

LIFEGARDENER

My promise to you is that I will be your LifeGardener guide, every step of the way. I will share with you my homegrown and handpicked ideas, tools and practices.

As your consciousness grows and you put these tools and techniques into practice, you'll discover what feels right for you. You'll find your own gardening style; you'll naturally cultivate the LifeGarden you love spending time in.

If you choose to embrace your life as a LifeGardener, as a conscious cultivator, you'll feel your inner power and confidence grow as your outer life comes into authentic full bloom. My hope is, you'll start to cultivate and grow your authentic, beautiful LifeGarden as naturally as the sun rises.

Are you ready? Let's begin.

Blooming with gratitude,

Lyndal

“What we seed, plant and consciously cultivate in our heart and mind creates the garden that is our life.”

PART ONE

ILLUMINATE



INTENTION SEED

n.

Any one-off action, new habit or attitude shift you are considering planting in yourself and your life to grow positive change.

Olwyn died on my mother's birthday, 23 February 2016, with a full moon in her own sign, Virgo. Her hospital surroundings were far from ideal, but she died surrounded by love. From just two children of her own grew an abundant tribe of seven grandchildren and – at age 88 – 15 great grandchildren.

My nan's passing was one of the most profoundly beautiful memories of my life.

While she was conscious, she let me massage her feet with oil and lavender lotion. I'm not sure it gave her relief, but I loved the chance to connect with her in this simple and intimate way.

Truth be told, while she was conscious and I sat massaging her feet, I felt, somehow, she would pull through this and we'd go back to filling her champagne glass and topping up her prawn plate at Christmas. It was a well-known family fact that if you half-filled Olwyn's champagne glass she'd shoot you a look and ask, "Is there a drought?"

Her other insistence was for salt, which my partner Guy calls ‘crack for old people’. If she had a dollar for every time she said, “pass the salt” she’d have died a wealthy woman indeed. Mum shared that Olwyn’s last tiny meals in the hospital were in great need of salt and “Where’s the salt?” was one of the last things nan managed to say.

When I returned to the foot of her bed after a break and she had lost consciousness, my instinct was to continue the massage ritual. Perhaps it was something she could feel even more now, without the distraction of room-filled conversation.

As I held her feet in my hands, a feeling of deep privilege washed over me. Solemnity swept through my body and being as I stroked her ankles and massaged oil and cream into the soles of her rough feet.

At the time of her fall, I’d been going through a dark, emotional tunnel and now, as she lay serenely, I felt her presence and reassurance stronger than ever before. Her spirit spoke gently to me: “Is this really what you want? Look after yourself.”

In the moment it came through I didn’t try to understand it. I just received her gentle, loving guidance. The resonance of her message stayed within me for the days and weeks that followed.

I returned home later that night and tried getting a little sleep, with plans to return to the hospital at first light. The large glass doors of my Blue Mountains bedroom verandah faced east towards the hospital down on the plains, Sydney’s vast sea of lights beyond.

I was woken around 3am, the bright light of the full Virgo moon illuminating my yard, the verandah and my bedroom. The world seemed bathed in divine light. I reached for my phone and saw eight missed calls and messages.

My family had done all they could to reach me. I had accidentally left my phone on silent from the hospital and must have slept so heavily I wasn’t woken by the vibrations.

I read the stream of messages, the final one simply, “she’s gone”. I dropped the phone, felt my heart bursting through my chest and stepped outside into the light. I wept for her ending, for my mother, for her whole beautiful tribe. Most of all I wept peacefully, still floating on the energy of her last message and the sacredness I felt at her feet.

I stepped back in from the moonlight and as I stared down towards the twinkling lights of the city below, a large owl landed on the balcony railing. It perched itself, turned its head a few times and flew away.

I was lifted by its presence, and assured her passing was perfectly peaceful. Despite the agony ahead for my darling mother and my family, this moment brought me nothing but peace. When I returned to the hospital to join my mum, her brother and my siblings, I knew this peace I felt was mine to hold quietly, for now.

When I returned to my car, I caught the last of the giant full moon setting over the Blue Mountains. A last divine goodbye. The grace of her filled me again.

When I say I was grateful for the experience of my nan’s passing it’s simply because I was as conscious as I was able to be throughout. Being in the presence of our family matriarch in the hours before she left this world felt nothing short of a divine privilege. As difficult as the experience was, I feel richer for it, for my willingness to stay present in all the sacred moments.

In this first part, I’ll share how staying present and shining the light of truth on our experiences allows us to feel our way to what moves us deeply, what matters most. We’ll uncover the innate power we

carry inside – like an Olympic flame – to light our path through the darkness and consciously take our truest and most natural next step. And I'll share the TruthSeed that intention is everything. As actor and *Green Lights* author Matthew McConaughey put it, "Words are moments, intentions are momentous."

My hope is that Olwyn, my beautiful grandmother, knew the shade of her grace, beauty and generosity was and is enough for her whole abundant family. Like all who grew from her, I have much to be thankful for.

The gift of her death was that it reminded me of the richness of life. Not just in the clichéd *live life to the fullest* kind of way, although that's one of death's great lessons.

She showed me, as she slipped away, that we are all here to be as deeply present with each other as we humanly can be. Sitting with her as she died reminded me, we are human *beings*, not human *doings*.

It also reminded me that we each have the power to cultivate our own divine experience of life in each and every moment, each and every relationship, every single day.

If my nan's life were a garden, I imagine it began as a barren wasteland. Unloved and unwanted, her garden tells a familiar story of Depression life between the First and Second World Wars, when children were seen and not heard. On top of the generational pains, she had a rough, cruel start to life. I'm told her mother called her a 'dirty Jew'. Her skin and hair were darker and dirtier than her blonde princess sister.

I've had moments, while she was alive, when I was so deeply grateful to experience four generations of women of my lineage in one room. They say we stand on the shoulders of our ancestors, but the women in my family can stand on equal ground, knowing our mere presence

and softness is enough to connect us to all that we are collectively cultivating – and that's a privilege.

As time passed, especially in her final years, she softened. Some could call this softening inevitable, given the glorious, abundant growth of her tribe. However, I believe some people choose to harden like an old tree as they age – not always consciously – and others go the other way. At some point she consciously chose to surrender to the sweetness and softness of our collective heart connection. It was a pleasure and an honour to witness.

She chose to start *smelling the roses*, she let love and light into her heart, including with my mother. In her final years, despite the physical irritations that come with ageing, her LifeGarden was a rambling estate, full of exotic delights, daphne, lilies and jasmine in bloom. I imagine her garden full of plants, surviving and thriving in places they shouldn't. And plenty of large trees with generous summer shade to cool her English self.

At the end of our life, all we have is memories. Those who practice being present can more easily recall the richness of those memories and draw on the intensely beautiful emotions of everyday minuscule moments. That's what I want.

I want a LifeGarden rooted in all the things I value most, nourishing the soil of my deepest and most authentic self. I know good things will grow in my life no matter what I do. But I want to look down on my LifeGarden – not just at my life's end, but every time I stop for a moment of gratitude – and see before and within me all the divine and incredible things I have planted, grown and cultivated.

When things get tough – and they will – I want to know my LifeGarden is so fragrant with love that even life's darkest moments will end, and I will grow and cultivate joy and love and laughter again.

I want to share in the fruits of my life's work, share the bounty of my abundant LifeGarden with those I love, and those who cannot yet see and feel their own ability to grow love in their garden.

I owe it to my grandmother, we owe it to all our grandmothers, to step beyond the darkness, struggle and limitations they have overcome. Whatever your grandmother's story, however she softened or hardened, you can consciously cultivate your own divine LifeGarden now, not wait until your final years.

Every single one of us is constantly cultivating our lives. Every choice we make, every action we take, every thought we germinate, influences what grows inside us and in our life.

You may not be aware of it, but you have some of your time and energy planting new ideas, weeding out unwanted habits and problems, composting your past and growing your goals, dreams and aspirations. You may not have been aware that LifeGardening is in your *nature*.

The only difference between you and I is that I have embraced the concept of being a LifeGardener, as a way of living life and making sense of what it is that I can cultivate in myself and my life, no matter how crazy and uncontrolled the world around me seems (and let's face it, then 2020s have given us plenty of crazy).

Consciously cultivating your life brings with it a responsibility. Stepping up as the gardener of your life can sound pretty daunting, particularly if you've been ignoring or neglecting some parts. It can seem like too big a job if some of your LifeGarden 'beds' feel completely overgrown with weeds. But it's the weeds that reveal the truth of what we could potentially release or weed and replant with the new.



We are all LifeGardeners

Being a LifeGardener is about making conscious choices that feed the soul, that bear positive fruit and make your LifeGarden a beautiful place to live in, for yourself and those you love. Every choice and decision is an opportunity to grow in strength, confidence and power, as the cultivator of your LifeGarden.

Like all things we learn, you can garden and grow at your own pace in your own way. The only prerequisite is the desire, the willingness, to start somewhere. The beautiful thing is, starting exactly where you are is just perfect.

You (almost always) reap what you sow

When you hear that expression, does it give you karmic shivers? Do you feel a burden of responsibility, as if everything you've experienced as bad, traumatic or stressful you somehow brought upon yourself?

Let me just set the record straight here and now. That kind of thinking is completely unhelpful. There are many terrible things that happen to good hearted, well intended people.

The LifeGardener version is this:

You reap what you sow, so try to be conscious of what you *want* to grow!

Although there's a level of responsibility inherent in this, there's also awesome potential for new growth, new beginnings, and self-determination. Viewing your life as a garden and yourself as the LifeGardener means you have the power to plant something into a situation that could, potentially, completely change the outcome. This could be a simple action, a thought or belief, or words we say, or don't say, to another.

This concept bears fruit in both the short and long term. Here are some examples of seeding in the present moment:

- You're in an argument with someone you love, you're furious and they're pushing all your buttons. You feel your temperature rise and – just as you go to say something cutting – you stop yourself, breathe and say, “I just need a few minutes to cool down.” New Action seed sown.
- You're running late for an appointment, speeding and stressing. You pull into a petrol station, call about your appointment and tell them you're late, buying yourself an extra 20 minutes. New Action seed sown.
- You're taking 30 minutes to sit down with a cuppa on the couch when one of your kids asks for some help with their homework. You're exhausted. You usually oblige, but this time you say, “Sweet, I'll join you at [insert time]. I'm just taking some quiet time.” New Action seed sown.

Now, all of the above are present moment examples, but you can see how the smallest, sometimes split-second decisions, impact the quality of our experience. There's no guarantee any of the above actions will have a positive long-term impact. However, if we sow certain seeds often enough, the benefits will eventually grow. If we start regularly sowing the same kinds of seeds in similar situations, you can see how much more likely it is that you'll reap more positive outcomes.

What seed of change could you sow now?

Take a couple of minutes to consider the examples above. Is there a situation or regular conversation in your life that might call for a new seed of change to be sown? If you find one, try planting it next time the situation arises.

Here are some examples of longer-term sowing. Reality warning: these are real examples taken from my own life. (Let's start with the bad one first):

- Late 1988 - I'm about to head off on a Whitsundays holiday with my boyfriend's family. His parents are paying. I'm 19, working in their son's business and not drawing a wage. I am financially irresponsible, fiscally unconscious and hoping the debts I have accrued will magically disappear while I am on a vacation I do not deserve, filling my belly, buffet style, three times a day. In the last 72 hours before flying out, I receive calls from four different debtors chasing payments. I was reaping exactly what I had sown. I'd been sowing seeds of financial irresponsibility for years.
- Late 2017 - I step out on a Saturday night in December to perform at an annual African dancing and drumming concert known as *Banquet of Dreams*. I'm feeling and looking like a Goddess. I've been wanting to dance live for this amazing group (Hands, Heart and Feet) for years. The night has finally come. I step onto the dancefloor, nervous, treading on toes and apologising to other Goddesses around me. But I make it through. Not only that, I meet the man I'm going to marry. He's a part-time drummer. We agree to a date the next day and had seven dates in our first week. Yes, meeting Guy was magical, and yes, the outfit helped. But the fact is, I had spent the previous two years single, and not dating. Not only was I busy doing other things, but I had been sowing the seeds for a loving relationship and getting clear about what I was wanting to experience and was willing to bring. (More on this story in Part 5).

According to Albert Einstein, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. The LifeGardener version is planting pineapples and expecting zucchinis.

I want you to take this notion – *You reap what you sow, so be conscious of what you grow* – with absolute lightness. I want to make this really clear: this book has grown from an organic desire to bring clarity, simplicity and freedom, not to burden or overwhelm.

When you're playing with each of the budding concepts in this book, take your time to explore and experience what's on offer, and you'll know what's ripe for your picking.

You can seed change in any given moment, simply by choosing to think, act or speak differently. Planting a new thought or action is how we plant and grow a better future in the present moment.

Once you awaken to this and become aware of its power, you can consciously cultivate big changes in small steps.

Death of the indoor plant

When I asked a green-thumbed friend of mine who gardens for a living, "What's the key to good gardening?" her answer was simple: observation. She suggested the best way to grow my food garden was to just start and then observe what happens along the way.

That wasn't really what I wanted to hear, although I knew it as truth. I had a 20-year long trail of short-lived and under-nourished indoor plants to remind myself of what life looks like when you're too busy to pay attention to the things that need food, water and sunshine.

I've come to realise my indoor plants are a direct reflection of the quality and richness of my life. Today – not to boast – my indoor beauties are thriving and onto their third repotting upgrade due to their unbridled lushness. This brings me more joy than my family can quite understand. Nevertheless, as I wipe dust from their thank-

ful, deep green leaves and empty the last of my green tea into their eager pots, I smile widely both inside and out.

The state of my plants tells me I am awake and aware of my surroundings, paying attention and giving love where it's needed most, including to myself. I am no longer running through my life at great speed, missing the beautiful and important things. Covid-19 has made working from home a workable reality, and vastly increased the love and attention our indoor plants and pets have received. (Apparently, dogs are much happier about this than cats, who were much happier at home alone.)

Presence brings power

As you'll see from the pages ahead, I've spent much of my adult life like many women I know: too busy and time-poor for the little things that make a huge difference to the quality of my life and the richness and depth of my present moment experience.

Most tragically and importantly, being busy and not paying attention to what needs feeding and watering can bring a much higher penalty. Being too busy to slow down, get conscious and listen deeply to your heart and soul is the opposite of being deeply present, as present as I was at my grandmother's feet.

It's hard to stay conscious of life when you're super busy, and it's totally possible to be living your life and not actually be *in it* while it's playing out. It's the difference between watching live theatre and reading a theatre review. Not being present for the people you love means you miss the heartbeats between the words, the delicious moments of energetic bliss, elation, discomfort – the whole fruitful orchard of deep emotional connection.

Not being present can manifest in a number of ways. For me – and perhaps for you – it can look like this:

- ✿ I have to ask someone to repeat themselves because I wasn't listening, I was thinking about or distracted by something else.
- ✿ I start writing my mental shopping list or solving a problem in the middle of sex.
- ✿ I refuse to sit still long enough for my daughter to speak to me, instead asking her to follow me around the house because I'm busy with something else that can't wait.
- ✿ I get fidgety during a boring work video call, turn off the camera and start on something else.
- ✿ When I'm interrupted by a phone call or someone walking in while I'm in the middle of something, I feel my neck tighten, sigh audibly and want the conversation to be over before it's begun.
- ✿ When listening to someone speak, I butt in with my opinion before they have a chance to get the last word out.
- ✿ I see every little unexpected interruption of my 'flow' as an annoyance, rather than accepting what's happening in the present moment.
- ✿ I feel a general sense of unease, like wherever I am and whatever I'm doing, I should be somewhere else doing something else.
- ✿ I start to feel fragmented in my mind, like a mosaic waiting to be made, bits of broken tiles lying everywhere with nothing 'coming together'. (This feeling is quite common when I've been over-scrolling on social media or jumping from one thing to another for too long).

- ✿ I feel anxious and in need of space and time to myself, get snappy and short tempered with everything and everyone. (This is a sure sign I haven't been present enough to create spaciousness within and between the things I've been doing and the conversations I've been having).

In my experience the most devastating periods of non-consciousness have come from not being present with myself, my inner knowing, my self-truth. My ability to move through life while ignoring what my gut instinct was saying, sometimes screaming, still blows my mind when I look back.

When I reflect on the abusive bosses I endured and the long-dead relationships I over-stayed, I realise it's completely possible for a sane, seemingly happy and healthy human to function on the surface while ignoring the truth that lies beneath in the deep, rich soil of her soul's longing.

I know this because I *did* this, repeatedly.

What my green thumb friend told me to do with my food garden – plant then observe what happens – sounded like work to me, and all I wanted was a simple and bountiful food garden I could chart, plant, harvest and rotate on my (Virgo inspired) gardening planner. What I've come to realise in my life is that there is no set-and-forget, plant and walk away.

Life's garden does not grow according to our plans, our planting charts. And sometimes, when we look closely at what's been growing – in our life, relationships, in ourselves – while we weren't paying attention, it's deeply painful to look at. For me, when I've looked long and deep at the most weed-infested parts of my life, my biggest and toughest weeds were the things I hadn't done, the decisions I hadn't made and had left for others to make *for me*.

The weediest of my LifeGarden beds have been in the areas of money and intimate relationships. How did I manage to get through the ‘weed watching’ without falling into a pit of deep shame and despair? I dug deep and tapped into the deeply rooted, deliberately hidden moments and memories in search of clarity and freedom.

I did what I’ve now termed *Compost My Past to Feed My Future*. I’ll share a little of it in this part, then dive more deeply into the intimate process as we get to know each other a little better.

Down there, in the depths and darkness of self-truth – digging through the past of my relationships and finances in order to make better, healthier and more informed choices – I never really felt alone, because I took the light with me.

Light changes everything

When you travel into a dark cave with a head torch or down a hallway with a candle, your intention isn’t to keep the dark away, it’s to light the path right in front of you so you can take your next step with just enough confidence and courage. You can never see the whole darkness, that’s the point. Your only task is to take one step at a time.

The same applies to our past, our self-truth. You never really know until you venture into your own darkness what might appear. Even if you’ve walked this very same cave or hallway several times before, there’s every chance you could be surprised by what you find, feel, encounter and unearth.

What do you carry with you when you’re afraid of the dark of your past? Some people carry faith, others hope or prayer. In my recent experiences into the darkness of relationship and money past, I’ve been

led by two sources of light. The first is my very clear and heartfelt double intention:

- to dig deep into the soil of my past to uncover my self-truth, no matter how raw or scary.
- to uproot the fear and shame, then shine the light of self-compassion so my soul can continue to grow and bloom toward the light of its own truth.

Self-compassion is vital. It’s the key here. Without self-compassion there is shame. Without self-compassion there is self-judgement. Without self-compassion there is paralysis. Self-compassion is the cradle that gently rocks the mind, body and spirit as it journeys through the painful process of growth and evolution.

The second light source I call on to guide me through the darkness on my quest for self-truth is divinity. God, the source, guides, grandmothers, angels, Buddha, Gaia. It matters far less to me what we call our connection to the divine than that we can choose to be connected and supported at any moment.

On a recent early morning beach walk a woman approached me. She seemed both blissful and bursting with enthusiasm. I smiled at her. “This is my church,” she said, pointing to the quiet, soft silken sea and morning light. “It’s a sacred time of the day,” I answered. We spoke for a short time, but our conversation went deep.

When it ended and she hopped into her car, she paused and called out to thank me for our rich and deep conversation. I came away with a familiar buzz, not an ego or adrenal buzz, but a steady, content vibration that reminded me how it feels to speak openly and bravely. This is how it is when two humans see, hear and feel each other fully, when souls dance together freely and effortlessly; no agenda, no past, no future, just pure connection in the moment.

For me, this vibration is my reminder of what it feels like to be heard, seen, safe, supported, connected, and loved. Not just by another, but by life and the universe. So, when I dive bravely and deeply into my past or a situation so I can *Compost my Past to Feed my Future*, I consciously and clearly ask for universal support.

I say or write “Thank you Universe for what you are about to show me, and for supporting and guiding me to truth.” Sometimes I’ll ask for my highest truth. I know when I ask for the universe to Illuminate, to *Shine to Light of Truth*, I cannot control what that means. I have no idea what will be uncovered, how painful it may be. I simply trust that it’s essential to my growth, and that, if I walk with the light of self-compassion and universal divine support, I will be safely cradled.

Why would anyone even bother putting themselves through the potential pain of diving into the deep soil of the past? Why not just plant something new in your life and move on?

If you’ve ever had a garden, you’ll know how persistent weeds can be, and how satisfying it is to remove them and give other things a chance to grow. Only you know if one or more of the beds in your LifeGarden needs weeding. I don’t need to point it out to you. You know what needs attending to, what’s lacking water and growing the most weeds.

Where are your weeds?

Without any sense of judgement and with as much self-compassion as you can muster, what does your instinct tell you about where the weeds are in your life right now?

When trying to make positive change in any area of your LifeGarden, you need to start exactly where you are, with self-truth. If there’s an area of your life you’ve neglected, it may need some serious feeding, watering and nurturing to bring it back to life.

But the starting point is always Illumination. I usually start by just asking myself, like a friend would ask, what’s going on in this area of my life. Sometimes the questioning is prompted by a gut feeling that I need to give something or someone some nurturing and attention. Other times, it comes from a conversation, or argument that reveals just how deeply rooted a problem is.

One thing I’ve come to know is the deeper you dig for the truth, and the more you Illuminate the truth of where you’ve been and who you’re becoming, the more beautiful and fragrant the blossoming of you.

Ask the blooming questions

I’ve learnt to go easy on myself when seeking truth. It can be hard to hear and see what you’ve let grow inside yourself and your life. I’ve come to understand that shame is not helpful, and that the softness that comes from allowing yourself to gently open like a flower to the truth of any situation requires understanding and forgiveness.

As I dig deeper into the soil of my truth, I do so from a place of gentle self-curiosity, not blame or interrogation. In my experience, the more loving and kind I am with the Blooming Questions I ask myself, the more likely it is that the whole-hearted, fully fragrant truth will reveal itself.

The questions are often more important and powerful than the answers. When the questions you ask yourself – when you write them down or ponder them – elicit a response from deep within your body,

you're probably tapping the roots of truth. Even the slightest feeling, tingle or discomfort can reveal signs of shift and change – potential transformation – even before you try to answer the question.

Starting simple, there are three questions I use to dig into the truth of what's going on in a particular area of my life:

- What is going on, really?
- How is it impacting me and others?
- How do I feel about it?

I'm big on journaling, so I find freewriting useful. Sometimes it's emotionally charged at first, sometimes I draw a blank but, eventually, the picture starts to emerge. (If you want to try answering these questions, there's an exercise at the end of this part).

I have a *soul sister*, Alison. We frequently leave WhatsApp messages for each other, talking through whatever's going on in our lives, big and small. I noticed that when she left a series of messages, she often resolved her issues while talking. She'd dig deeper and deeper with each message. The final message would often be, "Thanks for listening, I feel so much better now."

For a while, when either of us would do this, we would apologise for ranting or rambling on. One day I suggested to her we should find a more positive term for it, as it was working well for both of us to talk out loud without interruption. We decided on *Wandering*. If you don't have someone you can WhatsApp Wander with, you can always use your voice recorder on your phone.

My favourite kind of Wandering is in nature. I've loved walking for as long as I can remember. The miracle of walking out your thoughts and issues is you almost always arrive in a much clearer, stronger, wiser state. I don't think I've ever stormed out of a conversation, taken

a walk and come back angry. Equally, I've never left the house with stress or a problem and not returned a little freer and closer to a solution. Nature's magical that way.

The second question is a useful one: "How is this impacting me and others?" Sometimes something that bugs or irritates us has zero impact on those around us. The issue wouldn't be tugging at you if you didn't think it needed attention.

The third question, "How do I feel about it?" can be huge! My strongest example of this is around money. When I first started cultivating my money garden, illuminating my feelings around the issue shone the light of truth on a lifetime of lies, self-deception and irresponsibility. It took me all the way back to my childhood when the lights would unexpectedly go out because Mum and (step) Dad hadn't paid the electricity bill.

I went back to seeing mum at the grocery store, after she realised she'd picked up more food than we could afford, giving the yummiest foods back to the checkout girl. There was a loooooong list of seeds that were planted in these first (almost 50) years of my life before I began cultivating a more positive and powerful money LifeGarden. (More on that in Part 5).

When we first open our eyes to what's going on in certain areas of our life, on the surface, things can seem clear and simple. But when we start to look closer, dig deeper, and illuminate truth, that's when things get powerful.

All that digging down deep to illuminate your unique truth and the root causes enriches the soil for you to plant your next potential steps – your Intention Seeds.

Seed your truest intentions

Imagine for a moment that every seed in the world looked the same on the outside, and that the only way you could determine what you grew was by having a clear and powerful intention. If you intended on growing apples, you'd grow apples; if you intended on growing tomatoes, you'd grow tomatoes. You simply had to be clear about what you wanted and that's what you'd get.

Imagine now that every seed in the world still looked the same on the outside, but no matter how much you thought about it or tried to will apples into growing, you had no control over what grew from that seed. You'd have to be happy with whatever you got. "You get what you get, and you don't get upset."

This is a great metaphor for life, right? Sometimes we feel we can *will* things into growing our way. Other times, we've got no idea what's the hell's going on or how we got here!

In LifeGardener language, an Intention Seed is any new Action, Habit or Attitude shift you're considering planting into your life. For example, in the case of money, that could mean:

- ✿ Paying bills on time – Habit Intention Seed
- ✿ Spending thirty minutes on Monday nights talking money with your partner – Habit Intention Seed
- ✿ Saving 10% of your weekly wage – Habit Intention Seed
- ✿ Creating a new money mantra each week – Attitude Intention Seed
- ✿ Finding a money mentor or book with great reviews – Action Intention Seed

The LifeGardener way is to understand that if you're going to plant something, you'd better be sure you want it to grow (What you reap is what you sow).

Intention Seeds take this notion two powerful steps further:

Step 1 – Stay open to your Intention Seed's Potential

Don't tell your seed what it's going to grow into. If the weather's too wet, too dry or too windy, your Intention Seed may not make it. Certain things in our life only grow in just the right conditions. And there's a more beautiful reason to avoid limiting your Intention Seed's potential: what grows from your Intention Seed – whether it's a simple action, habit, or attitude – may be wildly *better* than what you planned (planted) in the first place.

Step 2 – Plant your Intention Seeds in rich soil

The more you practice digging into your truth, the more powerful the potential is for your Intention Seeds to grow. They will grow from a place of authenticity and truth, rather than growing from someone else's expectations or agenda. And as your negative patterns, actions and beliefs show themselves – as they will – you can use these as compost to enrich your desires for change and feed your future. (More on *composting* in Part Four).

Here are some simple questions I ask myself when looking to create new Intention Seeds in an area of my LifeGarden:

- What do I want to change (within and around me)?
- What am I willing and wanting to do to make this change happen?
- What is one thing I could take action on now?

Unlike the Illumination process, which digs down deep, I tend to just go with my intuition and keep this fairly light. Sometimes I prefer to do some visual journaling (doodling and drawing) rather than just writing. I draw little seed shapes and write around them and keep my mind open to all sorts of possibilities. The more open and relaxed your mind is – like a light warm breeze – the easier this part seems to flow.

There's no right or wrong. And remember, these are just *Intention* Seeds. This is just a written exercise, a bit of exploration, like wandering with appreciation through your favourite garden. You haven't committed to actually planting anything. We've got the whole book to explore planting, seeding, weeding, composting and cultivating together.

LifeGardening Exercise

ILLUMINATE + SEED

Ready to get your hands dirty?

Pick just one area of your life – money, job, career, relationships, parenthood, creativity, self-care, health, family, friendships, community work, a project... anything.

STEP 1

Illumination

Grab a journal or piece of paper and pen to explore the following questions:

- What is going on, really?
- How is it influencing or impacting my life and relationship with others in positive and negative ways?
- How do I feel about it?

If you need more time to dig deep on this one, consider taking a walk in nature, talking this through with a friend, or recording your voice on your smartphone.

STEP 2

INTENTION SEEDING

Now that you feel you've Illuminated what's true for you in this area of your life, explore (with lightness) the following questions.

Remember, you're looking to explore what Intention Seeds – actions, habits, attitudes – you could possibly plant to seed change:

- What do I want to change (within and around me)?
- What am I willing and wanting to do to make this change happen? (write 3-5 ideas)
- What is one thing I could take action on now?

Now do that thing, plant that seed, and feel your cultivation powers grow!

Part One Harvest

Let's recap what's been Illuminated in Part One:

- ✿ **We are all LifeGardeners.** You may not be aware of it, but you have spent time and energy planting new ideas, weeding out unwanted habits and problems, composting your past and growing your goals, dreams and aspirations. You just may not be aware of it.
- ✿ **You reap what you sow.** You can seed change in any given moment, simply by choosing to think, act or speak differently. Planting a new thought or action is how we 'seed' our future, how we create a better future in the present moment.
- ✿ **Light changes everything.** The deeper you dig for truth, the more you Illuminate where you've been and who you are becoming, and the more beautiful and fragrant the blossoming of you.
- ✿ **Ask the Blooming Questions.** When the questions you ask yourself elicit a response from deep within your body, you're probably tapping the roots of truth. Even the slightest feeling, tingle or discomfort can reveal signs of shift and change, even before you answer the questions.
- ✿ **Seed your truest Intentions.** Explore the Intentions Seeds – the actions, new habits or attitude shifts – you could plant in yourself or your life, to cultivate positive change.

Imagine your life is a Garden and YOU are the gardener.

Imagine you can weed out what's no longer working, compost your past to feed your future, and grow a life deeply rooted in the authenticity of who you are and what matters most to you.

LifeGardener is a philosophy for living, for cultivating life rather than trying to control it.

And it's a down-to-earth, get-your-hands-dirty guide to help you:

- ✿ Self-Nourish to Flourish - Discover new energy from your roots to your tips when you find what helps you thrive.
- ✿ Seed Your Intentions - Feel the power shift that comes when you stop over-thinking and plant your intention seeds in action.
- ✿ Compost Your Past – Realise your past, even the weeds, can feed and fertilise your future dreams and desires.
- ✿ Grow Organic Goals – plant organic goals that grow and change as you do, blossoming beyond your imagination.
- ✿ Cultivate Your Power – learn to cultivate all the time, energy and support you need to seed, plant and grow your Full Bloom Life.

LifeGardening provides a set of gardening tools – Seeding, Planting, Growing, Harvesting and Visioning – for cultivating powerful change and abundance in yourself your life and the world.



Lyndal Edwards is a Life Enrichment teacher and author. She is the founder of the Ready-Set-Grow Life Enrichment Program, where she teaches women the tools for cultivating positive and powerful change in themselves, their life, and the world. She is also the cultivator of the Full Bloom Cultivation Circle, which brings women together to seed their intentions and share what they are harvesting, in line with the moon cycles and the turning of the seasons.

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