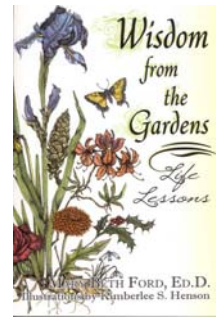




*Dr. Mary Beth Ford's*



## *Garden Wisdom Secrets*

### **Oneness and Diversity - Life Lessons from Nature**

During many nature walks I've brought my questions about life's purpose and my search for balance between world and Spirit. My journal contains my musings. I catch a glimpse of my Creator. I make connections between nature's images and life experience. Through them I want to entice you to make space in your busy life for time alone in nature.

Imagine yourself on a garden walk in the early spring. Pansies have begun to bloom once more under the early spring sun. Yellow winter aconites and lavender crocuses announce the coming spring. Hyacinth and tulip bulbs emerge. Hints of yellow burst forth on the witch-hazel bushes. Birds chirp their distinctive melodies. Squirrels entertain us with their antics. Close your eyes and spend a few moments enjoying your garden walk.

Nature's unfolding each spring releases such joy and contentment after the long winter hibernation. We witness the awesome power of the Universal Life Force recreating the world before our eyes. We watch the diverse garden residents participating in this creative process.

The world's wisdom traditions teach us that a Divine Essence flows through all creation. Nature reveals this truth before our eyes. We belong to the web of life. From belief in our oneness flows appreciation for the incredible diversity of the universe.

Diversity within a garden community nurtures its growth and balance. Diversity within the human family promotes the world's growth and harmony. Each member of a garden community has a necessary role in creating its balance. Each member of the world community has an essential role in creating its harmony. This shared purpose unites us. It makes each one of us equally responsible to the whole of creation.

My second springtime image involves the Lantana plant. It's a flowering plant with blooms concentrated in clusters. Bright orange and bright yellow are the colors I see most often. I especially like the blooms of mixed colors: an orange flower with a yellow center.

But the Lantana tree fascinates me most. Gardeners start with a small Lantana plant and prune it back to one stem. They tie the main stem to a stake to grow vertically. Once the desired height is reached, gardeners pinch the tip of the stem to promote branching. They support the tree's trunk with a stake. The tree produces colorful blossoms that delight the butterflies in late summer.

A powerful Life Force flows through the specially created Lantana tree, through you and through me. It nurtures our role as co-creators. We have the support of this Creative Life Force as we grow and branch out and share our talents and gifts in the world. The Lantana tree reminds me to trust that we never work alone.

Hildegard of Bingen, a medieval mystic of diverse gifts, was concerned with our role as co-creators. She describes creativity as both a cosmic and human power. Hildegard speaks about cosmic inhaling and exhaling, breathing in and letting shine the Divine Essence. It nourishes the creative self within and the world around us.

In both natural and human worlds, each member has a unique role that fulfills its purpose. Each member's power to create or to destroy affects the harmony of the entire system. Modern science now confirms what mystics through the ages have told us. Everything in the universe is connected with everything else.

It's time that we see the universe as an integrated whole and feel our connection to this whole. It's time that we honor our sense of oneness that is at the heart of being fully human and spiritually aware. But our search for balance must expand beyond a desire for personal fulfillment. It must include commitment toward the world community.

Through these two garden images--the miracle of spring and the Lantana tree--we can see the world as an integrated whole and feel our connection to this whole. We can feel the power of a loving Life Force that supports us in everything we do.

Perhaps our Creator intended nature's beauty as a catalyst for our reflection and learning, not just our admiration. Nature helps us feel our profound connection with a Higher Power. Nature helps us connect with our own inner power, our soul strength. Nature reminds us that we are not alone in our journey through life.

I encourage you to spend time alone in a garden or a woodland, on a mountain or by the sea. Anywhere that you enjoy. I encourage you to find your own nature images and your own life lessons.