

SPECIAL EDUCATION METAPHOR NUMBER TWO: TWO GARDENS

BY JANINE FREED

Mr. Spade was a gardener. He followed

the regime used by most of his fellow gardeners. His plants were arranged in perfect rows. The paths were at right angles to each other and formed perfect squares. Every day, each plant was given a teaspoon of fertilizer dissolved in two cups of water. On days when the temperature rose higher than 90 degrees, the amount of sunshine was controlled by shading the plants after they had received exactly five hours of sunlight.

Mr. Spade worked with a committee of specially trained taxonomists who categorized flowers by administering the

(IQ) Test, which evaluated the scent of the flowers. Mr. Spade made certain that each plant was tested. Plants that produced flowers scoring lower than 70 out of 100 on the Impression Quotient Test were removed from the main garden and transplanted in other areas. The taxonomists developed ways to group the low-scoring plants to keep the ones with similar characteristics together.

The taxonomists created many categories to accommodate all the differences. The more they evaluated, the more categories they defined—and more and more flowers were removed from the main garden to inhabit special areas.

Gardeners and

Picture
Removed

taxonomists were required to follow the regulations of *The Gardener's Guide* when they classified the plants. The most familiar rule was number 142, the "Appropriate Garden Law," found on page 94 of the current guide.

To make sure that each plant grew properly, in an ecosystem designed for its special needs, Mr. Spade designed an Intensive Enhancement Plan (IEP) for each plant. This plan was intended to improve the flowers' scores in the Impression Quotient Test. Mr. Spade and the taxonomists hoped that the Intensive Enhancement Plans would make all the flowers have the same fragrance. Some of the flowers, they knew, would never have as pleasant a scent as the others, but the gardener and his experts wanted them to come close to a score of 100.

Mr. Spade tried to comply with the specifications detailed in each plan, but in general each plant ended up with two cups of water, a teaspoonful of fertilizer,

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and five hours of full sun. Many of the plants withered, failing to bloom as they struggled to survive. Others died.

Mrs. Greenthumb was also a gardener, but her approach was different from Mr. Spade's. She determined how much water, fertilizer, and sunshine each of her plants needed, then chose the perfect spot for them. For example, she planted poppies in the moist soil around

a pond, where their smiling red faces reflected in the water. She massed hostas and lilies-of-the-valley in shady spots under trees where they would be protected from the sun's intense heat. And she arranged the delphiniums along the fence where they would get lots of sun and be supported by the pickets. She moved the plants that needed drier soils away from the pond and placed the thirstier ones near fountains and sprinklers. Each plant bloomed in its own time, so there was always a riot of color in the garden. And since nothing was planted in rows, the garden looked like a field of wildflowers. Mrs. Greenthumb gave each of her plants what it needed, and she was rewarded with their beauty and fragrance throughout the growing season. ☁

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