

The man standing before you has a bad reputation in the world of plants. If plants had post offices, my picture would hang there as a ruthless killer. It makes no difference what kind they are, how much or how little water they need. If they come under the same roof with me, they know it's certain death.

One of my classmates, who knew this about me, gave me a plant after I passed an important test. I said, "Jim, thank you, but you know better than this. This plant will die." He said, "That's all right. I've already explained it to the plant."

When I moved into St. Regis' rectory there were six plants in the house. Within three months two of them were dead and the other four were very nervous. It was about then I looked at the back yard for the first time. I saw tall green plants I hadn't remembered seeing before. That's when I learned there is one crop I can grow: weeds. There were so many we hired Belger Cartage to haul them away.

This spring one of our parishioners planted a garden of herbs and perennials in my back yard. She showed me the hose and promised everything would be all right. Of course several plants have died on the altar of ignorance, but the rest are doing quite well.

A few weeks ago the crop I grew so well last year returned. Weeds and crabgrass were overtaking the back yard.

My garden has taught me eight lessons about life.

First, the growth of something beautiful is exciting.

Second, even though you sow good seed, weeds will appear.

Third, weeds grow all by themselves.

Fourth, weeds will grow worse every day.

Fifth, if you want to get rid of weeds, it takes work.

Sixth, the longer you wait, the worse the work is.

Seventh, if you uproot the weeds, you will kill them.

Eighth, if you kill the weeds, different weeds will return.

The word of God is like seed. Some of it falls on our footpath. It doesn't sink in and birds eat it up.

Some of it falls on rocks. We're excited at first but then we dry up.

Some of it falls among thorns. We hear the word of God, but other words are stronger: like "Buy this product," and "Love yourself first."

And some seed of God's word falls on good soil. We hear it and embrace it. And it grows. Still, even good soil needs constant care.

If God has planted his word within us, it will grow. But weeds will grow too. We can uproot them with prayer, charity, and good advice, but chances are different weeds will return. The work is endless, but flowers will grow. That's just how it is in God's garden.