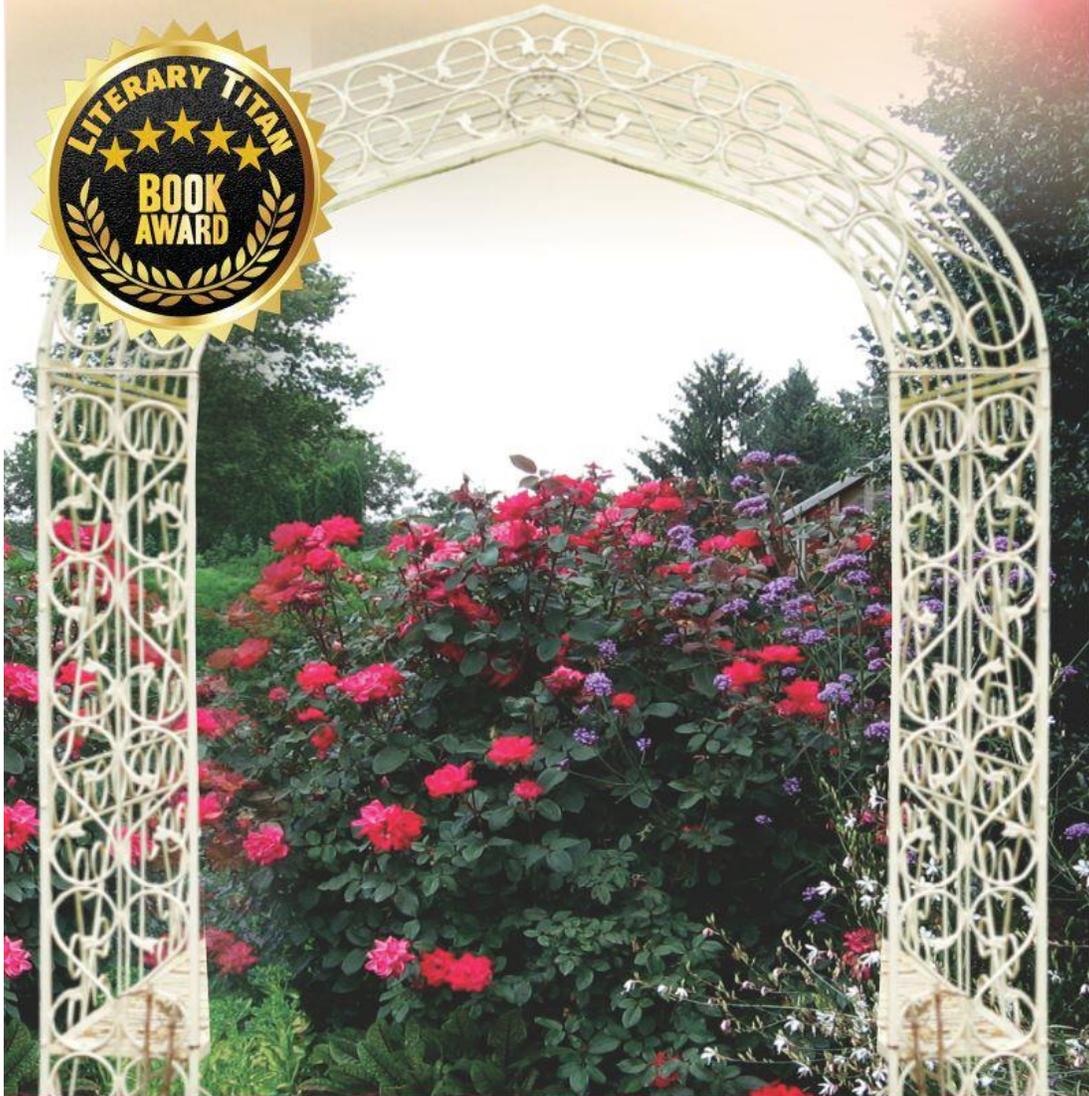


The Master's Garden

An Allegory of Abiding in the Vine



Rose Noland

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<http://www.heisworthit.com/>

ISBN 978-1-7350412-0-9

**PRAISE FOR
THE MASTER'S GARDEN**

After reading this delightful, spiritually rich allegory, I can honestly say I better understand what abiding in the Vine means.

~Andy Terryn, IPM National Missionaries in Uruguay

"I love how the author brings the reader into the garden. I can visualize talking with the plants and the Master Gardener as I traveled through the garden. The story has led me back to God's love and compassion with new eyes and a hunger to truly know God more."

~Sharon

"Rose does an amazing job with this beautiful allegory. She captures your attention with this heartwarming story within a story. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and look forward to sharing it with many others needing encouragement in their Christian journey."

~Holly Vaughan, Pastor's wife, WV

Reading good books is not one of my strengths, but what a blessing it was to read The Master's Garden! This is a masterful piece of work and a delightful, fictional story, that is full of great biblical truths! The love of God is clearly shown through the character of the Gardener and what a great example of what the Christian life looks like through the different plant characters. This story is perfect for any age and a great tool to draw many to the Savior! Well done Rose!

~Vance Hunt, Elder MABC

"I was immediately pulled into the world of Plantasia and Little Rose's life. I liked the way she developed the characters based on their plant names.... I plan to use this book to teach my grandchildren what it means to abide in Christ. I totally enjoyed this book and came to tears at times—watching how God works with us and in us. Rose, this is Great!"

~Rena Russell

Rose has written an allegory that paints an inspiring picture of the love story between God the Father and His children, using the analogy of the vine (Jesus) and its branches (Christians). It also tells the beautiful love story between her and the husband God gave her, the loss of that love and God's precious nurturing that allowed her to triumph victoriously in the face of loss and change. There's something in this story for everyone!

~Peggy Neilson, Christian School Teacher,
Women's Ministry Co-leader

"I became very immersed in this book right away. The more I read, the more I wanted to read. The characters were so enlightening, and hit close to home. This was truly an inspirational work."

~Mary

“I thought Rose’s analogy between plants and people was very creative. I liked the flow of the story.... I believe this allegory will help the young as well as the ‘old’ understand the meaning of abiding in the Vine and help them to do so.”

~Paige McCauley, Elder’s wife and former
Revive Our Hearts outreach ministry partner

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~Paige McCauley, Elder’s wife and former
Revive Our Hearts outreach ministry partner

“The Master’s Garden is a delightful metaphorical allegory of God’s loving care and wisdom.”

~David Gaines, Senior Pastor Manna Bible Baptist Church

“A wonderfully whimsical easy to understand story even if one is not a gardener who knows the name of every flower.... I would recommend this book for a young reader as well as a knowledgeable gardener looking for greater understanding.”

~ A Fellow Gardener

“This heartwarming story provides a new perspective on a fear that so many struggle with: What if I’m not good enough to measure up? Rose Noland combines her love of gardening, and her wealth of life experiences to help her readers see that reaching the heights of their potential can only be accomplished by twining their roots deep into the Vine. A great read for a quiet afternoon by the fire—or in the garden.”

~H.B., Christian school teacher
and English Department Head

“I’m not a gardener. I dig holes in the ground only where my wife instructs me. Yet I love ‘The Master’s Garden’ with its rich and endearing symbolism!

~S.L.

As a gardener, I thoroughly enjoyed this book. The allegory with its gardening terms and names of plants really kept my attention.... I would recommend this book to any Christian who sincerely desires to grow in intimacy with the Master Gardener and reach her full potential for His glory.

~Susan Ader, Women’s Ministries MABC

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener...you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”
(John 15:1, 5)

*I dedicate this book to Jesus Christ, the only True Vine—
for without Him I know I can do nothing.*

Preface

I have always been intrigued with the analogy of abiding in the Vine found in John 15 of the Bible. Perhaps it's because I am a gardener and I can understand the comparison better than those who don't play in the dirt. But it wasn't until my Lord gave me this unusual idea of a strange world with talking plants that I came to a much deeper understanding of what it means to abide in Christ.

My prayer is that this allegory will help you to do the same. I have written this story in a way that even if you don't know the first thing about gardening, you will be able to understand what it means to abide in Christ.

I have strived to be biblically and horticulturally correct. However, I have taken poetic license, botanically speaking, in a few spots.

Some basic gardening terms and a list of all the plant characters are provided in the back of the book. If you don't have any knowledge at all of how plants work, then I recommend you read the *short* description under *General Plant Biology* before you start. You may also find it helpful to read the brief explanation of grafting under the *Plant Terms*. Otherwise, happy reading and abiding!

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Prologue

It was a glorious morning. Roselyn Bates worked busily in her garden, appreciating all the colors and fragrance. “God certainly knows how to create beauty!” she thought. Despite the beautiful day, Roselyn was burdened for her granddaughter, Violet, who was going through a very rough time. She was questioning so many things about life and herself—just like Roselyn had done in those vulnerable years of middle school. So Roselyn did what she had learned to do—pray. Suddenly the Lord gave her a wonderful idea.

She immediately went inside to phone her granddaughter. “Violet, honey, would you be able to come over one weekend to help your grandma in the garden?”

“Sure! I like doing that with you. I always learn cool stuff about plants from you!”

Roselyn hung up the phone and straightaway went to work on implementing God’s idea. “Gardening can wait!” she thought.

The following week Roselyn had an extra spring in her step as she anticipated the arrival of her only grandchild.

“Hi, Grandma!” greeted Violet. “I can’t wait to work in the garden with you. What are you going to teach me today?”

Inwardly Violet longed to be like her grandmother who was so joyful and had accomplished so much. Roselyn used to serve as a missionary in China, helping others to become self-supporting by growing fruits and vegetables. Now, she used her gardening skills to help and encourage others. She grew lots of vegetables to give to needy families. She made jams, pies, and zucchini bread for those needing encouragement. She’d cut her beautiful flowers as bouquets for the sick.

She seemed very old to Violet, who was only eleven, yet she toiled tirelessly for the Lord with such joy—even after Grandpa died. She was a mystery. Violet knew her grandmother had many ailments and burdens—how could she stay so joyful?

But Violet felt like she was nothing more than a shrinking violet! She felt like she couldn’t do well in *anything*, much less accomplish things like her grandmother had done! Life seemed really unfair to Violet. However, many sad things had happened to Grandma Roselyn and *she* didn’t think God was unfair about it all. It was just too hard for Violet to figure out.

After they had worked for a while Violet asked, “Grandma, how were you able to do all that stuff in China? You gave up so much. And no matter what happens, you’re usually smiling. I don’t think I could ever go through what you have—and still be happy.”

Seeing the opportunity to use God’s idea, Roselyn said, “Oh, I wasn’t always that way. Let’s take a break for lemonade and cookies. I have a story to tell you.”

“Yeah, I think I need a break from the hot sun, and I love your stories!” Violet exclaimed.

As they sat enjoying their refreshments, Roselyn began her tale.

Chapter 1 A Strange World

Imagine. A world containing very unusual plants that can think, see, hear, and speak—a kind of plant-animal hybrid, so to speak. This world, called Plantasia, was beautiful—filled with all types of plants from the tiniest flower to the towering giant redwood.

The Master Gardener created this strange world for His pleasure. He was good, loving, powerful, all-wise, and very patient. Most of all, though, He was pure and perfect.

Now the Gardener loved all the diverse vegetation in this world which He had made, and wanted nothing more than for each plant to love Him in return. He gave these unique plants the ability to choose whether to come under His loving care or remain in the wild and live on their own.

When plants agreed to come under the Gardener's care, they were grafted onto the roots of the Vine and became permanently His. Now this Vine was no ordinary plant. He came directly from the Master Gardener Himself and there was a special bond between Them. Their union enabled embedded plants to connect with the Gardener in a personal way.

Plants belonging to the Master Gardener thrived under His tender care. He knew their exact needs. He abundantly supplied them with light and Living Water and fed them with His Word. His Living Water carried nutrient truths up to all parts of the plant, helping them to absorb the vital minerals. This life-giving liquid not only sustained them but also promoted extraordinary growth.

In addition to these three essential ingredients of light, water, and food, the Gardener used other measures to help His plants flourish. He pruned, divided, transplanted, and sprayed as needed. He did this out of His lovingkindness; longing for each one to achieve its full potential.

The duty of each individual plant belonging to the Gardener was to grow and be beautiful in His eyes and to reflect His wonderful qualities. In order to accomplish this, they needed the strength of the Vine. If they tried to grow roots outside the Vine, ugly and distorted growth resulted. The more they lived their lives through the Vine, the more they flourished. How much and how quickly they developed into what they were meant to be largely depended upon their willingness to cooperate with their Keeper.

Each plant was designed to reveal the character of the Gardener differently. Some were grand, like the mighty oak. Others were very prolific, like the squash. And then there were those who were just small and dainty, like the lily of the valley. Each was uniquely fashioned, cultivated, and valued by the Master Gardener. All brought Him distinct pleasure as they displayed His handiwork and fulfilled His plan for them.

Together, all the Gardener's plants showed His greatness and majesty. It was a sight to behold! Their beauty was so appealing that it drew wild plants to want to know the wonderful Gardener and be placed under His nurturing care.

However, there was an even more important reason why all plants needed to belong to the Gardener...

In the beginning everything was perfect. In this newly created world, the Master Gardener planted two individuals into a beautiful garden and told them to enjoy growing there. They were instructed that their roots could go anywhere, *except* for one small area.

So they flourished and frequently enjoyed the presence of the Gardener as He walked among them—until one dreadful day when everything changed.

You see, the Master had an evil enemy. He used to be one of the Gardener's helpers but wanted to usurp the Gardener, so he was kicked out of the garden. This enemy wanted nothing more than to get revenge and sought to destroy this perfect garden. On that fateful day, he tricked the two plants and enticed them to penetrate their roots into forbidden territory. Little did they know it was contaminated. They became infected with a deadly disease which eventually spread throughout the entire garden and the rest of Plantasia. But the good Gardener couldn't leave them in this dying state. He had to make a way to rescue His precious plants.

Therefore, He planted His special Vine into the world, One that had the very same qualities as the Master Gardener. The pure and perfect Vine grew and experienced all the same difficulties as any plant does—and even more. Yet He grew exactly as the Master Gardener wanted, and pleased Him in every way.

The enemy hated the Vine because He came from the Gardener. He tried to lure the untainted One into polluted soil. But he failed repeatedly. So he worked hard to cause the death of the Vine. But little did he know that was the plan of the Master Gardener all along. It was only through the death of His special Vine that He could provide the means for all the plants of this world to be decontaminated. You see, since the Vine came from the special Master Gardener Himself, He was able to come to life again! Now there was a way to purify infected plants from the deadly disease—through the precious living Vine.

All plants wanting to be cleansed needed to be grafted onto the Vine's rootstock. In that way, they would be able to connect with the Master Gardener and enjoy His presence once again. And the only way their growth could be pleasing to the Gardener was if it originated from the pure and perfect Vine.

One day the Gardener would destroy this world to permanently remove all the infection; only those plants belonging to Him would survive. Now since the Gardener loved all the plants in Plantasia and didn't want any to be destroyed, He passionately went about getting His message of deliverance out. He used those belonging to Him, like Solomon's Seal, Sunflower, and many others to spread His message throughout the entire world. Some of His messengers remained where they sprang up, others He relocated into different areas where they could be witnesses for Him. But no matter their location, they remained attached to the Vine—for He was everywhere.

Because of their connection with the life-sustaining Vine, the Gardener's plants thrived, even in places with extreme weather. Their healthy condition perplexed the surrounding wild plants, so many were willing to hear what they had to say about the Gardener. Yet not all asked to be placed into His care.

The Gardener's enemy wanted nothing more than to prevent wild plants from becoming joined with the Gardener. He told them lies about Him and blinded them to the truth. Nevertheless, any half-honest plant knew there was something different about those belonging to the Gardener. His plants were so well cared for that one would have to be a fool not to acknowledge the existence of the Gardener. The evidence of His lovingkindness was obvious to any with an open mind.

When the Gardener's adversary wasn't able to keep a wild plant from entering His care, he tried to hinder its growth and development in a variety of malicious ways. Although he couldn't completely uproot any belonging to the Gardener, he could cause much havoc and ruin the glorious display in any given area.

One day the evil one would be permanently annihilated, but until then he was always seeking ways to spoil the growth and beauty of the Master's garden. The loving Gardener was well aware of all the enemy's tactics. He worked diligently to rescue and protect His precious plants. And He was capable—for He was far more powerful than His nemesis!

Chapter 2 Little Rose

Now in this world was a rose. She was a very poor specimen for her kind of plant—a climbing rose. She felt ugly and insecure. She called herself *Little Rose* because she saw herself as small and insignificant.

You see, while she was growing up, Little Rose was very sheltered and didn't get what she needed for proper development. Growing under an overhang, she didn't receive enough water. Her parent, not knowing any better, also overprotected her from the sun. As a result, Little Rose was stunted. And while she didn't want to remain small and scrawny, she didn't know how to change.

Little Rose was a highly emotional plant. She easily became upset when things didn't go her way. She was a perfectionist, which made her critical, judgmental, and complaining.

Still, Little Rose had much going for her. She was passionate and motivated, and her desire to be perfect caused her to strive toward excellence. You certainly couldn't call her a slow grower. Ever since she could remember, she aspired to be something more. She thought, "If only I could produce beautiful blossoms like a Hybrid Tea Rose, then others would admire, not pity me. They would talk about how lovely Little Rose is. Then I wouldn't feel so pathetic."

The other thing Little Rose knew was that she didn't want to be like her parent plant, who was afraid of everything. At the slightest possibility of bad weather, she would flail her thorny branches, inflicting much pain on those around her as well as herself. Her parent was unhappy and made everyone else around her unhappy. Little Rose knew there had to be more to growing than what she saw. So as she matured, although still fearful, she ventured out a little with her yearning roots and did grow some—at least horizontally.

In time, she began to see that there was a whole new world out there. And even though she was scrawny, she was enthusiastic and strong-willed. She thought, "If I put all my effort into it, perhaps I *can* be more than I am right now." Therefore, Little Rose continued to move out from under her oppressive environment by growing along the ground, for she didn't realize she was a type of climbing rose and made to grow *up*.

Little Rose had few friends. She was just too shy and hadn't learned how to relate to others. She never felt like she fit in and feared others would reject her. Forget-Me-Not was her closest companion since they could understand one another. It was a good thing that Little Rose was also a very curious plant; it really helped her to overcome her bashfulness. She hungered to know about everything—her environment, how to cope with poor conditions, and especially how to grow into a beautiful floriferous rose and become more than she was. She learned a lot from her surrounding plants like Smartweed and Sage (although much of it wasn't true). Little by little she became more independent and felt so much freer than she had when she was growing up.

One day, she noticed Dogwood growing not too far away and began speaking to him. He was strong and kind. His horizontal branching structure was very attractive. It didn't take long for her to become attached and use him for support. She began to grow significantly and *vertically* under his love and encouragement. "I wonder—could I be a type of climbing rose?"

she thought. "Well anyway, the view from up here is way better. This is more like true living!"
And for the first time in her life she was happy.

But would it last?

Chapter 3 New Beginnings

Little Rose and Dogwood were good for each other. They helped each other to grow. Dogwood was stable and consistent. Little Rose was wildly enthusiastic, often trying to grow everywhere at once. He added calmness and security and gave her a place to blossom; she added variety and fragrance to his branches. They made a great pair. Many onlookers admired their undying love for each other. At times they looked as if they were only one plant because they were so intertwined.

After some time, though, Little Rose began to feel discontented again. There remained a longing for something more. She thought, “I’m just not *totally* happy. I have a comfortable environment and someone who loves me. But is this all there is? Why does it feel like something is still missing?”

Subconsciously, Little Rose began seeking to fill her emptiness. The Master Gardener, aware of her yearning roots, placed several of His plants near her.

The searching rose noticed there was something different about them. They were thriving and always at peace, even during bad weather. And they were constantly talking about the Gardener and a future Perfect Garden.

So, the curious and now less-shy rose began to talk with them. She was particularly attracted to one called Peace Rose, a beautiful—and famous—hybrid tea.

“Peace Rose, I noticed you were calm last night during that awful storm. Why weren’t you afraid? I was terrified and shaking all over.” Then remembering her prickly parent, she added, “I hope I didn’t hurt you with any of my thorns. I couldn’t help that my stems were flailing all over the place.”

“No. I’m fine,” Peace Rose said. “The Gardener protected me. I have very little damage. See?”

“Yes, I see that,” said the rose relieved. “Aren’t you the lucky one! I have quite a few branches that were tattered during the storm.”

“Luck had nothing to do with it. I belong to the Master Gardener and He protected me.”

“Well, I don’t believe the Gardener exists.”

“Why not?” asked the hybrid tea. “There’s no way I could survive, let alone have all these beautiful yellow and pink flowers without His care!”

“If you really want to know,” said Little Rose, “I looked for the Gardener when I was young. I knew I needed help, but I didn’t find Him.”

“Many others, like Bishop’s Weed and Cardinal Flower, *said* they believed in a Gardener but it sure didn’t show up in what they said or did. It made no difference in their attitude or growth. They just gave a bunch of rules to follow—which no one did.”

“My parent said she believed and relied on the Gardener. But all she did was constantly complain about her environment. She was never happy or content. Her roots were always seeking after more fertilizer because she didn’t believe she had what she needed. As a result, she produced lots of leaves and prickly stems, but very few flowers. She worried about every little cloud above, fearing it would turn into a major storm and cause her damage.”

“Even if a Gardener existed, why would I want to come under His care to become just like my parent?”

“No offense, Peace Rose, but I think He’s merely a figment of your imagination.”

“None taken,” replied Peace Rose, knowing from where her security came. “May I ask you something, Little Rose? Where do you think we came from then? And all this beautiful world around us?”

“It evolved, of course! Over millions of years. Everyone says so. Look, I don’t want to talk about this anymore!”

Deep down though, Little Rose wondered: if all this beauty had evolved—then why was there so much ugliness and barrenness around her? But the hardness of her stems prevented the truth from penetrating.

However, despite her unbelief, there were two things she could not deny. Plants belonging to the Master Gardener were continually praising Him, and they had an unexplainable peace even during bad times. Still, she didn’t think she needed Him. The Gardener’s plants tried to convince her how important it was to come under His care, but she wouldn’t listen. “I don’t need the Master Gardener to grow and flourish! I have Dogwood and my own strong determination. I can thrive without Him!” Nevertheless, she was still attracted to them and was glad they were in her vicinity. “If only they would stop with all this Gardener stuff!” she thought.

Peace Rose desperately wanted Little Rose to come know the Gardener. She knew what was at stake. So she enlisted Sweet Alyssum and Prayer Plant in asking the Gardener to help Little Rose believe. Eventually, as the rose continued to see evidence of His care, she began to doubt her own unbelief. In fact, there were times she thought she caught a glimpse of the Gardener around those praising plants. “Oh, if only it was true!” she cried inwardly. “If such a loving, caring One existed I’d like to know Him.”

Then one day, she called out, “Is there a Master Gardener out there? Are You real? If You are, please show me, come to me. I want to believe in You!”

The Master Gardener heard her cry and appeared to her in an unmistakable way. “Yes, I am real, Little Rose. I’ve been trying to reveal Myself to you for quite some time now. I placed some of my willing plants near you, so that you could hear the truth about Me, and dispel the lies you were believing. This past year I’ve been passing by in the distance, but within your line of sight. At times I was quite near you, but you didn’t see Me. Your eyes were blinded due to your stiff stems and your persistent unbelief. Often, My enemy was blocking your view.”

Then with great passion the Master Gardener continued, “I want you to be Mine, Little Rose! Will you let Me place you into My Beloved Vine? Will you come under My care and let Me be your Keeper?”

“Yes, oh yes!” she exclaimed. “I see now that *You* are what I have been looking for all my life! Oh, but what about Dogwood?”

“No need to worry, He has also agreed to become one of My chosen plants. I will transfer you both together!”

Then the Gardener said, “I am giving you a new name, My little one—New Dawn.”

“Why, isn’t that a very tall climbing variety?” said the former Little Rose, startled. “I always hoped I could be a plant like that.”

“Yes, that is indeed what I made you to be. Now because you have been placed into the strong rootstock of My Vine, you will be able to grow to your full potential of twenty feet or more.”

With that, the Master Gardener departed. Thrilled with their new life ahead, she thought with great anticipation, “Now *everything* will be just perfect!”

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