

Made to Flourish





Cultivating an Abundant Life

## BETH MOORE

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Introduction	1		FERTILIZATION	119
HORTICULTURE	5		TRELLIS	125
DIRT	11		TRAINING	131
CLUSTERS	17		FERTILE	137
VINEDRESSER	23		STAKES	143
TERROIR	29		FRUITFULNESS	149
ALTITUDE	35		REPRODUCTION	155
NATURE	41		CULTIVATION	161
ALFRESCO	47		FLOURISHING	167
SYMBIOSIS	53		COMPOST	173
ROOTS	59		GLEANING	179
HUMUS	65		HARDINESS	185
RHIZOSPHERE	71		SEASONS	191
ROCKS	77		DORMANCY	197
HYPAETHRAL	83		CULTIVAR	203
INSPECTION	89		RIPE	209
BRANCHES	95		HARVEST	215
PRUNING	101		VITICULTURE	221
TRANSPLANT	107	0	VINTAGE	227
OVERCROPPING	113	JA.	Notes	232
		. 11/1	About the Author	233



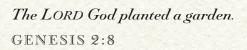


I have been enamored with Christ's teaching on the vine and the branches since I cut my teeth on Bible study, and I've taught about His call to fruitfulness as an essential part of life's satisfaction for at least twenty years. The spectacular thing about Scripture, however, is that, like no other book held in human hands, its ink may be dry but it is the furthest thing from dead. The words are alive and active, and the Holy Spirit who inspired them can animate the most familiar passage and spring it to fresh life again in your soul.

It happened to me in Tuscany a year ago, on a dream trip I took with my daughters. The place was otherworldly. We stayed three nights at an inn on a hillside in the upper quadrant of a vineyard. I could stand on the grounds and in every direction I looked, I saw vines.

On our way into town by taxi one morning, we saw the last of the harvesters walking the rows—inspecting the vines and clipping the final heavy clusters of fruit. Captivated, I felt like I was watching live reenactments of some of Christ's own parables. It was not lost on me that one of His final exhortations to His disciples was, essentially, "Be immensely fruitful" (John 15:5-8). The image of the vineyard has consumed me ever since.

When Jesus told His disciples, "My Father is the gardener" (John 15:1, NLT), He wasn't using random imagery to sketch His point. From the very first book in the Bible, we discover that God is a gardener:



From the beginning, it's God Himself with hoe and spade. It's God who's afoot with herbs and bulbs. It's God with the knack and no Farmers' Almanac.

It's a wonder to me that God would choose to slowly grow what He could have simply created grown. Why on earth would He go to the trouble to plant a garden forced to sprout rather than commanding it into existence, full bloom? Why leave His desk and get His pant legs soiled?

Because God likes watching things grow.

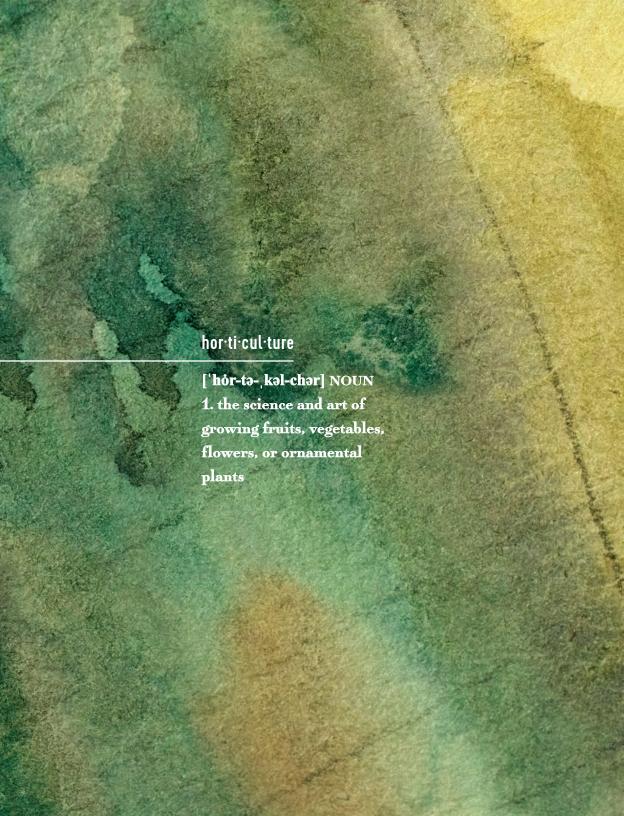
This metaphor plays out throughout Scripture as He tends His people with care, skill, and intention. When Jesus began His ministry on earth, He took this idea to a whole new level, revealing that He Himself is the Vine. He invites us to the sacred ground of abiding, calling us to flourish in the abundant life He offers.

In the following pages, I invite you to explore the fruitful life through the language of the garden—and the words of the Master Gardener Himself.











The Bible uses gardening terms for the acts of God time and again. In 2 Samuel 7:10, God is described as appointing a people and not placing them, but rather planting them where He wanted them. Psalm 94:9 says God planted the ear on man, and according to Luke 22:51, Jesus could also clearly replant one, should that be necessary. Words like *rooted* and *uprooted* and *grounded* all speak the language of horticulture. God is the master gardener, and we, His tender seeds.

The Lord has chosen you and planted you, and He is preparing you for a great harvest. He's getting you ready to thrive and flourish and bear much fruit. If we submit ourselves to His ways, mysterious and painful though they may be at times, we will find that it's all part of the process that enables us to grow and bear fruit.

