

Secret of the Flowers



By Irene Malek



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Secret of the Flowers

Respect for Life



Once in a magical garden called Fairyland, a little fairy was watering the roses in her garden. As she glanced up, she saw her friend Iridescent Iris flying towards her.

“Trina, have you heard the news? We have a new neighbor, old Mrs. Weatherbie and she’s fixing up the wooded lot behind her property. She’s trying to plant flowers with those old hands of hers.”

“I’m sure she needs help!” said Trina “Let’s go and see what we can do.”

Iris rolled her eyes.

“Trina, there you go again,



butting into people's lives," said Iris in an irritated way.

"Oh, Iris, if I can do something to help, I will."

"Well, I can't go. I've got too much to do" said Iris and off she flew.

Trina looked a little sad while she watched her friend leave and she thought to herself,

"I'm sorry you can't come too, Iris." And then off she flew toward the cottage.



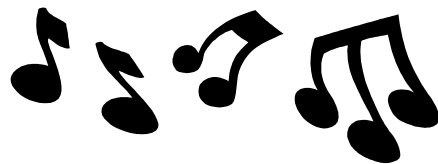
When Trina got there, she noticed that Mrs. Weatherbie was very old. But although her hands were gnarled and she walked with a limp, Trina could see how much she loved her flowers.

"Well," said Trina still thinking about what Iris had said, "looks like this lady *does* need a helping hand. Trina then flew over to the flowers and began to show them how to grow larger and brighter than they had done before.

At that time, an odd thing began to happen. The lovelier the garden became, the more Mrs. Weatherbie heard a certain sound like a faint hum.



Finally, one clear sunny day, she noticed something else. “I think . . . that the humming has changed into a melody and . . . Yes!” she gasped, as she walked over to the flowerbed, “It’s actually coming from the flowers!”



Day after day, Mrs. Weatherbie worked in her garden. The more care and love she gave it, the sweeter the music sounded. Little did she know that a small fairy was helping her too.



One day while Mrs. Weatherbie was inside the cottage thumbing through a gardening magazine to order more plants, some children wandered into the back lot. It was the first day of summer vacation and they felt excited with their new freedom.

“Hey, Jimmy!” shouted one of the girls.

“What a great place to play Hide and Seek! Let’s play here!”

Without thinking about what was happening, they began playing and were so caught up in their fun that they didn’t notice that they were trampling the flowers.

Trina, who was doing some necessary weeding in her own garden, heard a high pitched tone coming from the direction of the old cottage and realized that something



was wrong. After flying at top speed, she discovered the children and the damage that had already been done.

She whispered into their ears,

“Stop before it’s too late!”

but they were too excited with the game. Only the smallest boy hesitated for a moment but then soon joined back in the fun.

“Where’s Mrs. Weatherbie? I’ve got to find her!” said Trina, flying into the cottage. Then she whispered a warning in Mrs. Weatherbie’s ear about the garden, but the woman was lost in thought about her future garden.

Not wanting to give up, Trina said,

“I know how to get her attention!”

She flew over to some empty flowerpots sitting by an open window. She put her shoulder against them and pushed with all her might but couldn't budge them. Finally, Trina knew that she needed more help and sent out a message on the fairy network.

At that time, her friend Quill who was nearby, came riding in through the window on the back of a humming bird.



“Came as fast as I could!” he puffed.

“Thanks, Quill!” said Trina and she quickly explained what had happened. The two of them pushed the flowerpots with all their strength and finally sent them crashing to the ground below, startling Mrs. Weatherbie.

“What was that?” she said racing outside.

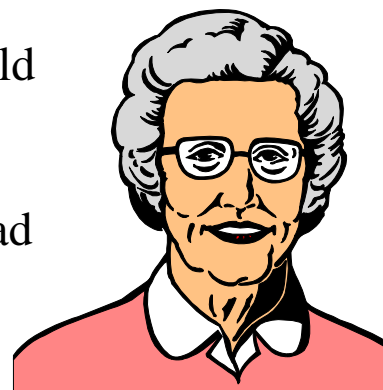
There in the garden, Mrs. Weatherbie discovered the children. But it was too late, for many of the flowers were trampled and tattered.

“Oh! My garden! . . . and the music . . It’s gone!!”

The startled children stared at the old woman as she sat down on a rock, and put her face in her hands.

Now for the first time, they were amazed at what had happened.

Mrs. Weatherbie then sat down and told them the whole story of the secret of the flowers and the music that the flowers had created but was now lost. When she finished, the children sat very quietly.



Charlene, one of the girls stood up and said,

“We’re sorry. We were just having fun and didn’t know what we were doing. We want to help you fix your garden. Then maybe the flowers will make their music again.”

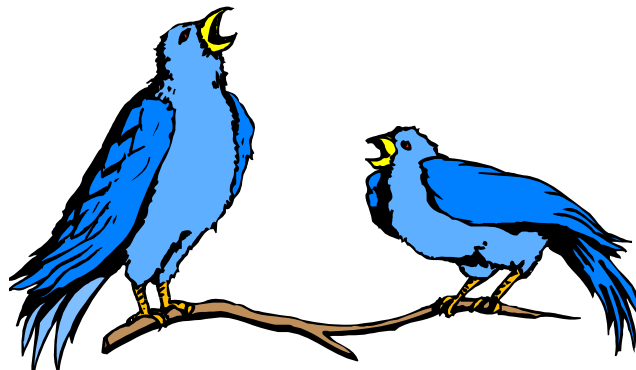
All the children agreed and so every day whenever they could, they would run over to the old cottage in the woods.



They pulled weeds that were choking the flowers, watered plants that were dry and were especially careful about where they stepped among the plants.

After the children had cared for the garden for many weeks, the flowers began to bloom once again. But even though they worked hard watering and weeding the garden, the flowers did not send out even as much as a hum, let alone beautiful music.

Trina, herself, tried to do everything she could think of, but still the flowers were silent. Only the birds sent up a cherry note of song.



Then one afternoon, Mrs. Weatherbie had an idea and asked the children to come together for a meeting.

“Children, there is something I just realized,” she said.



“When I worked on my first garden, I had so much fun because I really loved creating something beautiful. Now I want you to appreciate what you’ve created! This garden is more incredible than the first one ever was!”

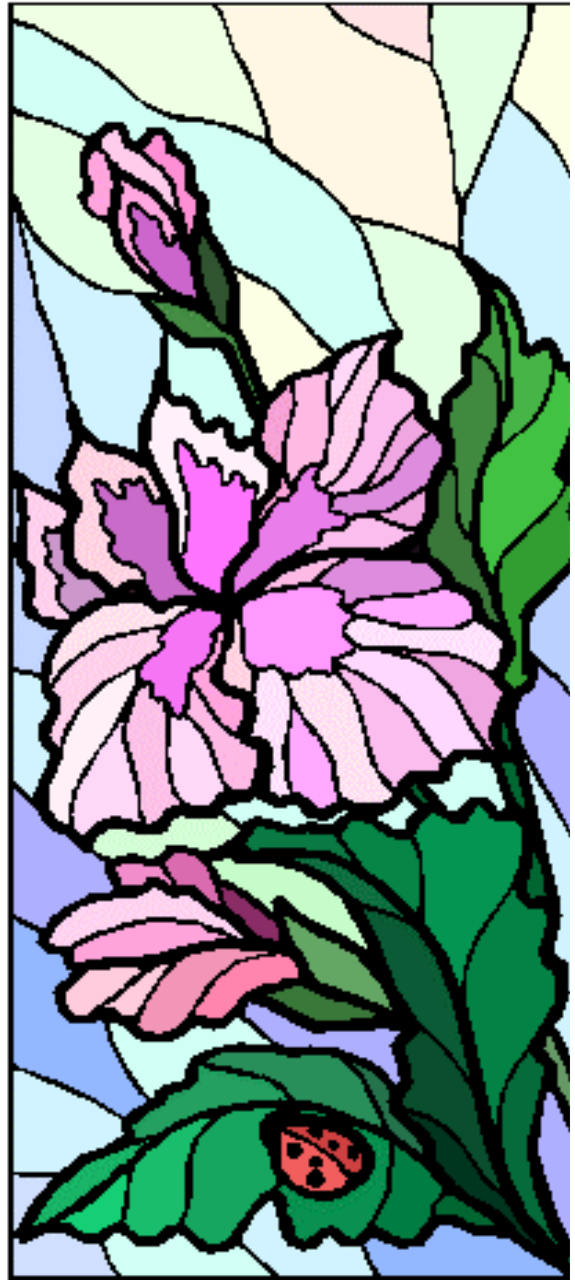
The children gazed at it and for the first time saw how lovely the flowers were. Everything was still and hushed. Trina saw the opportunity and whispered in their ears.



“See the blessing that the flowers hold for those who truly love them.”

All the children thought about how much they loved working in their garden. Soon, Jimmy, the youngest of the children, blurted out,

“I love our flowers!” and then turning to the old woman, he cried,



“and you too, Mrs. Weatherbie. You’ve been such a good friend to us!”

With that, all the children rushed forward and hugged her. Only Trina saw the rainbow of light streaming from the garden and surrounding them.



Then, they heard it. It started out like the sound of the wind blowing in the trees except there was no wind. Gradually, it got louder and louder. None of the children moved—it was as if their feet were rooted in the ground, because now they realized that the sound was coming from their own flower garden. The beautiful flower music had returned once again!!





From that time on, people would come from far away to see the magnificent flowers at the Weatherbie cottage and hear the music. As the years passed, many of the local people would always wonder about the old woman and the happy children who tended the garden. For legend has it that Mrs. Weatherbie and the children knew something special about growing their garden. And only one little fairy knew that they had discovered the secret of the flowers.

Follow-Up Activities for The Secret of the Flowers

Questions

1. What do you think was the secret of the flowers?
2. How did Trina help Mrs. Weatherbie?
3. How did the children learn to respect the flowers in the garden?
4. What do you think Trina would say to her friend Quill the next time she saw him?

Daily Practice

1. Brainstorm with your children about how you can show more respect to each other as a family.
e.g. speak kindly, play fairly
2. Make a large poster of your brainstorming session. In the center of a large piece of poster board, write down all the ideas that the family listed. Then as a family activity, get out markers, crayons and glitter. Decorate it with flowers, birds and butterflies.
3. Decide together on a subtle signal or a sign that anyone could give when someone shows respectful behavior.
4. Practice saying the Shinshu Creed: "I shall respect and help my fellow beings, and work for the good of my community."
5. Make a list of respectful words to use. (e.g. please, thank you, you're welcome, excuse, I'm sorry)
6. Diary of Respect: For 5-10 minutes each day provide an opportunity for everybody to write down the times when *others* did something respectful. Encourage children to write the events down as soon as they see it happen so that they won't forget it. Then, at the end of two or three days, take time to share with everyone what he or she wrote about the respectful actions of others.

Quiet Time/ Self-reflective Activities

1. Have each child find an object in nature that they think is beautiful, such as a flower, butterfly, rock, leaf, starfish, shell, etc. If an object is not available then a picture would do.
2. Tell them that this is 'deep appreciation time' and that they need to sit in a comfortable position so that they will not be distracted.
3. Put on some quiet uplifting music while they look at all the intricate

- details of their object.
4. It is absolutely essential that you do the same and that there is no talking during the time.
 5. Gradually fade out the music after about 2 or 3 minutes for younger children—longer for older children or if their interest is still high.
 6. Allow a few minutes for them to express what they experienced, listening in an accepting mode.

Other Activities

A. Respecting Self

1. Ask how Trina, Mrs. Weatherbie and the children all respected themselves.
2. How can we respect ourselves? Write down all the examples given.
e.g. Eating well, standing up for what is right, speaking respectfully to others, getting enough sleep, exercising.
3. Ask each child to make their own book illustrating how they will respect themselves more than they have in the past. On each page, draw a separate picture and write a sentence under it. It should be agreed that everybody has the right to keep his or her diary private.

B. Respecting Others

Golden Rule Activity:

1. Print out a copy of the Golden Rules from the website www.teachingvalues.com.
2. Glue it onto a larger piece of cardboard so that there is a frame of approximately 2" on each side. Cover the sides of the cardboard with strips of tissue paper to make a colorful frame.
3. Find pictures from National Geographic magazine of people from other cultures and paste them around the frame.
4. Later, children could brainstorm different ways that they like to be treated. Then have them rethink the rules and how they can apply them to other people. (other children, relatives, people from different cultures, handicapped people.)

C. Respecting Property

1. Look around the neighborhood and find areas where respectful behavior was used (e.g. lawns cut, gardens tended, recycle bins) and where respectful behavior was not used (litter, unpainted areas, property needing repair).
2. Ask “What could we do to improve our neighborhood?” Maybe there might be some project that they would like to do, such as, helping a senior citizen or picking litter up in a certain area. Remember that the children need to feel that it is *their* project so you have to be careful not to take over when they can do it themselves.

Magic Writing for Young Children:

1. You and your children make up a list of their favorite things that may or may not have some of the names of the plants from the garden.
2. Print the words clearly on one by three inch strips of tag board and put them in small containers, one for each child.
3. Invite the children to bring their word containers, a plastic cup and a clean paintbrush outside on the sunny sidewalk or blacktop.
4. Fill each plastic cup with water.
5. Have the children take a word out of their word container.
6. Then have them ‘paint’ the word on the ground with water and brush.
7. Words should be painted in small letters unless it’s a proper name.
8. Children can have fun checking the spelling before the word disappears!

Variation of Magic Writing (for toddlers and very young children)

1. Invite them to help ‘paint’ some of the things outside and make them look like new.
2. Go outside. Fill up a bucket of water and give each of them a small plastic container and a clean paintbrush.
3. Show them how to ‘paint’ with careful strokes and make the gate, lawn furniture, fence, wagon, etc. look fresh and like new.

D. Respecting Nature

1. Go for a walk with your children in an area where examples of nature can be found.
2. Let them find something of interest. (e.g. an insect, a pretty stone, a spider's web, seeds, a shell, wildflowers, birds)
3. Get them to notice all the little details about it.
4. Ask them what they would like to do with some of these treasures.
5. If they can't think of anything you could give them a choice of different activities and let them choose.
 - Draw pictures of the objects with as much detail as possible.
 - Research information about it. Give a little talk about it to the rest of the family, classmates or the neighborhood children.
 - Write an imaginary story about it.
 - If possible, make a nature collage picture using all the items that were collected.

Planting a Garden: Make sure the child has as much a part as possible in the planning and decision making as possible. Choose an area that you will not be attached to and has good soil and sun.

1. In the spring or fall, make plans for a garden. Read about what kind of plants to put into it. Draw up a plan for the garden. Let your children draw a picture of what they would like to see in their garden.
2. You and your child decide on what plants to purchase. If appropriate, let them save money to pay for them. Go on a shopping trip together and buy the seeds and plants (make sure they are plants that they can grow successfully).
3. Help them prepare the soil. Read together about correct planting methods.
4. Plant a small area at a time each day, stopping before the child gets tired or bored.
5. Take a real interest in every little bit of growth and encourage your child to see the changes every day.
6. Help your children with the watering and weeding of the garden so that it doesn't become a burden.

7. Plant a tree and give it a name. Let your child be responsible for watering and caring for it with a little encouragement from you.

Recommended Books

Invisible Princess by Faith Ringgold, (ages 5-8 years)

Born as a slave, a beautiful princess was made invisible by the Powers of Nature and whisked away by the Prince of Night even before her parents, Mama and Papa Love, could name her. Her destiny, given to her by the Great Lady of Peace, is that she would one day grow up to bring freedom to the slaves on the plantation. An original African-American fairy tale set during the time of slavery, this beautiful book from Coretta Scott King winner and Caldecott Honor winner Faith Ringgold will prove to be a treasure for years to come.

Bicycle Man by Say Allen (ages 3-8)

Soon after World War II, in occupied Japan, two American soldiers walk onto a Japanese school yard, and one of them delights the assembled students with bicycle-riding tricks. A charming vignette of the personal interaction between a pair of young men and a group of children, strangers with different languages and from different cultures, whose paths cross briefly and will never cross again.

Jungle Book by Rudyard Kipling (5-8 years)

This story tells of Mowgli, an Indian boy who is raised by wolves from infancy and who learns self-sufficiency and wisdom from the jungle animals. The book describes the social life of the wolf pack and, more fancifully, the justice and natural order of life in the jungle.

Miranda's Magic Garden by Linda Atnip (3-8 years)

Guided by the Keeper of the Earth and befriended by devas--spirits that live within plants--Miranda learns how to care for her garden, which thrives under her loving attention. The young heroine ultimately triumphs and creates a realm of wonder and magic in the heart of the city. By following her destiny, Miranda wins many new friends and shares with them the joys of gardening.

Videos

Davey Crockett (5+ years)

Fess Parker portrays Crockett as a good clean honest citizen who aims for the freedom of all men everywhere. This is an All-American classic. Though some of the characterizations might offend modern sensibilities, if viewed in context the show can be seen as respectful (except possibly to the British and raccoons).

Darby O'Gill and the Little People (7+ years)

Set in early 20th century Ireland, this tale involves the good-hearted caretaker Darby O'Gill's adventures with the fairyfolk of Ireland. Outstanding Disney fantasy about an Irish caretaker who spins so many tales that no one believes him when he says he's befriended the King of Leprechauns. An utter delight, with dazzling special effects--and some truly terrifying moments along with the whimsy.

Enchanted Forest (3+years)

Story of young boy who learns about life from old man who lives amid nature in the forest. It isn't just about a boy who learns something from an old man. It's about a painter who is granted a gift of magic and the ability to talk to the forest animals. He saves the forest by using his knowledge and love of nature.

Bells of St. Mary's

(5+years)

The Bells of St. Mary's recalls better days and romanticizes a gentler way of being, as suggested when Sister Benedict, after overhearing Father O'Malley remark that sometimes a man must fight his way through life, offers simply in response, "Why not make him think his way through instead?" Although the two characters rarely agree, they ultimately form a respect and liking for each other.

Principle of Respect

Principle: Respect for Life

Values: Tolerance, Courtesy, Cooperation

Summary: *We are all a part of this Creative Intelligence and have a spark of the divine within us. Therefore, even though there is diversity among us, through religion, sex, culture, age and status, we are all part of the Divine Family. Everyone we meet deserves our respect because we honor the divine within them. We show this through **courtesy, tolerance and cooperation** with all whom we meet.*

There can be no doubt that whatever race or religion, they derive their inspiration from one heavenly source, and are the subjects of one God. The difference between the ordinances under which they abide should be attributed to the varying requirements and exigencies of the age in which they were revealed. All of them, except for a few which are the outcome of human perversity, were ordained of God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose.

Baha'i Faith Gleanings from the
Writings of Baha'ullah 111

Confucius said . . . "In the world there are many different roads but the destination is the same. There are a hundred deliberations but the result is one."

Confucianism
I Ching, Appended Remarks 2.5

Principle of Respect cont.

Those who praise their own doctrines and disparage the doctrines of others do not solve any problem.

Jainism

Sutrakritanga 1.1.50

Like the bee gathering honey from different flowers, the wise man accepts the essence of different scriptures and sees only the good in all religions.

Hinduism

Srimad Bhagavatam 11.3

The Hindus and the Muslims have but one and the same God, What can a mullah or a sheikh do?

Sikhism

Adi Granth, Bhairo

We believe in God, and what has been revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in what was given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to God do we submit.

Islam

Qur'an 3.84

And I (Jesus) have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.

Christianity

John 10.16

As men approach me, so I receive them. All paths, Arjuna, lead to me.

Hinduism

Bhagavad-Gita 4.11

Principle of Respect cont.

Truth has many aspects. Infinite truth has infinite expressions. Though the sages speak in divers ways, they express one and the same Truth. Ignorant is he who says, “What I say and know is true; others are wrong.” It is because of this attitude of the ignorant that there have been doubts and misunderstandings about God. This attitude it is that causes dispute among men. But all doubts vanish when one gains self-control and attains tranquility by realizing the heart of Truth. Thereupon dispute, too, is at an end.

Hinduism

Srimad Bhagavatam 11.15

So Paul, standing in the middle of the Areopagus said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of you worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, “To an unknown god.” What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And he made from one nation of men to live on the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your poets have said, “for we are indeed his offspring.”

Christianity

Acts 17.22-28

Do not break a promise, not that which you contracted with a non-Zoroastrian nor that with a co-religionist. Both are valid.

Zoroastrianism

Avesta, Mihir Yasht 10.2

Principle of Respect cont.

And nearest to them in love to the believers, you will find those who say, “We are Christians,” because among them are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant. And when they listen to the revelation received by the Apostle, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears, for they recognize the truth. They pray, “Our Lord! We believe; write us down among the witnesses.”

Islam

Qur’an 5.82-83

Unto each nation have We given sacred rites which they are to perform; so let them not dispute with you of the matter, but you summon unto your Lord.

Islam

Qur’qn 22.67

From the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.

Judaism and Christianity

Malachi 1.11

And Peter opened his mouth and said, “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”

Christianity

Acts 10.34-35

Principle of Respect cont.

“Just so are these preachers and scholars holding various views blind and unseeing. . . In their ignorance they are by nature quarrelsome, wrangling, and disputatious, each maintaining reality is thus and thus.”

Then the Exalted One rendered this meaning by uttering this verse of uplift,

O how they cling and wrangle, some who claim
For preacher and monk the honored name!
For, quarrelling, each to his view they cling.
Such folk see only one side of a thing.

69,

Jainism and Buddhism Udana 68-

Excerpted from the Parable of the
Blind Men and the Elephant