

Marriage and Family Corner

By Mary McKinney | Posted: Monday, April 4, 2016 2:38 pm

“April showers bring May flowers.” The short days of winter are behind us once again and the rain and longer days of April promise new life. Of course in the High Country, we know that Mother Nature can be fickle and that warm weather can quickly turn back to cold, and rain may give way to snow. Still, spring will arrive and everything becomes new once again.

New life and better times result from preparation, planting, tending and harvesting at the right times. This process is as true for May flowers, as it is for our personal growth.

Growth of all types tends to follow a period of dormancy. Many perennial plants, such as apples and tulips, require weeks of cold dormancy, or vernalization, in order to bloom in the spring. Some plants, including the giant sequoia, require fire in order to reproduce. Humans also grow after a period of dormancy, or even destruction. Figuratively freezing or burning can bring some form of clarification and readiness. This process may be the result of externally controlled events, such as loss or trauma. It may also result from intentional preparation, such as meditation, prayer, study and reflection.

This intentional process for human growth is similar to keeping bulbs in a refrigerator during the winter, or doing a controlled burn in a forest. Intentional preparation for a plant includes ensuring proper nutrients, water and rest (dormancy). Humans require the same ingredients for personal growth.

Soil quality is critical to prepare for new growth. As with plants, adding compost or manure to the soil might make it rich enough to sustain growth. Most of us add plenty of compost and manure to our soil through thoughtless, irresponsible or impulsive actions. Of course, it stinks, but the right amounts do provide nutrients. Stones and weeds might need to be removed. Even other healthy plants might need to be removed in order to allow sufficient light and room to grow. That process of thinning might be painful because that which is removed might be missed. For example, removing unhealthy habits, such as smoking, removes barriers to any growth or to hearty growth. But, of course, breaking an addiction can be very difficult. Thinning the growth area might be the most difficult because the other living thing that is removed might be loved. It might be a close friend or family member. But, when light is blocked or nutrition needs are mutually exclusive, a decision to



It's all about growth

move is necessary to ensure survival.

After preparation and planting, continued tending is also vital. Additional weeding, watering and feeding must be provided. Dead parts may need to be pruned to allow energy to be expended for growth. It is tempting to be distracted from this upkeep after growth begins. This work and focus is critical to preserve growth.

Harvesting fruit requires work, too. Unharvested fruit rots on the branch or on the ground. And, fruit harvested too early may be of little or no use. Harvested fruit brings nourishment for self and others. It might also provide the seeds for future growth.

While this comparison isn't novel, the focus can bring consideration for personal growth. This focus can help rehabilitate a "black thumb" to a "green thumb." A green thumb can allow for enough growth for enjoyment — and not only for survival. Watch the natural order of growth and of seasons to guide this focus and work. Anytime we try to skip a season or a piece of the process, we are in danger of stunting growth, or, worse, of dying. Here's to your thoughtful preparation and your willingness to grow when external events prepare the way. Here's to planting and tending well. And, here's to the harvest of a bountiful life. Here's to your green thumb in your growing season.

For more information on available services or to discuss information in this column, contact:

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