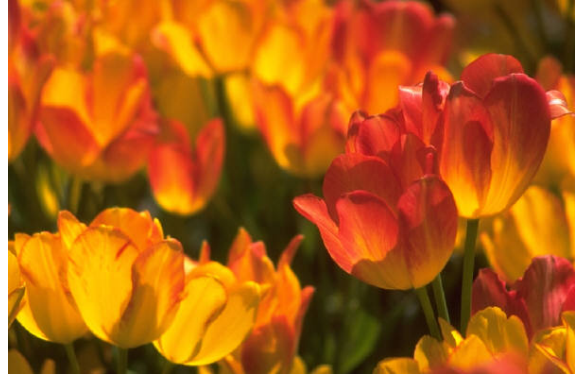


TULIPS

When I was a child, my mother planted loads of tulips and daffodils outside our house. Every spring a dazzling spray of red and yellow would come to life along our front wall. I still remember the glee that magical row of flowers inspired. So vibrant it was after the frozen winter! Seeing its colour turned on full by the sunshine was pure delight.



Due to my over-zealousness in the garden shop, I was surrounded by masses of purple, red and white last summer. In the fall when all the blooms had faded, my enthusiasm for my garden carried on. One day while out shopping, I spotted some bins containing all sorts of bulbs. I got a brilliant idea. I would recreate my mother's garden! Come spring, my patio was going to be a spectacle of colour, just like when I was four.

I am a novice container gardener. I choose flowers according to three criteria. Will they thrive in full sun? Are they pretty? Do I like the colour? My expertise is limited, but I do know that in the spring crocuses come up first, then daffodils and then tulips.

I was excited to see the buds emerge from the earth. The crocuses did what they were supposed to do and dotted my lawn with bold splotches. The daffodils had made their way above ground and grew a little taller each day. But what the heck were those tulips doing?

It appeared that two of them were going to bloom, but they had almost no stems. The full buds were going to open way down there between the big leaves. This was not the way it was supposed to go. Not only were they blooming out of sequence, they looked silly and weird. I called my mother.

"You have dwarf tulips," she told me. With the indignation of a four-year-old, I denied this immediately. "I do NOT have dwarf tulips! There is no such thing as dwarf tulips!" She told me there was. A few days later, an avid gardener friend supported my mother's theory.

The two untimely flowers actually did grow longer stems. They bloomed bright red and finished. I continued to look hopefully for signs of buds on their container mates. No buds. Lots of big, robust leaves though. The daffodils began flowering - ivory and a colour hinting at yellow. Not quite the vibrancy I was going for. My dream of the recreated garden had gone bust.

One evening I decided to give up on my dud tulips. I would dig them out the next day and plant seeds for summer. The next day came. So did the buds. Buds on stems that had grown up out of the leaves enough for me to finally notice them. Fabulous buds that opened up into gorgeous orange flowers that looked like flames. Amongst them there was even one that had two buds. It was screaming neon pink.

My spring garden didn't turn out the way I planned. It turned out better than I planned. That's because my design was altered by a touch of the Divine. My design would have rekindled the wonder and glee of my childhood, but it would not have so poignantly reminded me of many things we are often in need of remembering. Let me share them with you.

You, like the tulips, have your own way of doing things. You are an individual. You have your own timing. You have your own pace for growth. You have your own beauty. You have your own life. You are unique, just like a neon pink bloom amongst the flames.

Healing is not about making things the way they used to be. It is about creating something new, within yourself, and in your life. Healing is never about going back, unless it is to learn so that we can move forward on the strength of that learning.

When things don't turn out the way you planned, it doesn't mean the plan was bad. It might mean it needs some fine-tuning and that you'll have to go through a process of trial and error to figure out what needs changing. It might be that your plan is a vehicle that leads to the fruition of another different, better plan. It could be that your plan is exactly right, but the time is wrong for it. Don't trash your plan like I was about to trash my tulips just because it didn't go the way you expected. Learn from it instead.

When things don't go the way you want them to, disappointment can cloud your vision. Only you can decide what you are going to do with your grief. You are the one who chooses whether to cling to an outcome that did not happen, or to seek healing that will allow you to see the possibility in what is.

When your choice is to focus on what didn't happen, you are blind to everything that can. When you see only what you do not have, your riches remain invisible. You miss the chance to grow. You miss the profound beauty of the gardens you sow.

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