

The Gardener and the King

The King looked at his garden from the balcony. "I can't stand it any longer. We have to find a gardener who can bring my garden to life."

"We've tried," said the Queen. "No matter who works in the garden, they can't get anything to grow."

The King tightened his jaw and narrowed his eyes. "I won't accept that. We'll send out messengers to all our domains. I want a gardener whose parents and grandparents were gardeners. I want someone with gardening in their blood."

The very next day, the King's messengers traveled out in all directions. After two months they were back. Only one messenger had met a gardener whose father and grandfather had been gardeners.

"Sire," said the messenger. "The gardener is very poor and in debt. No one will hire him because he walks with a limp. He feels he's not worthy to take such a position as the royal gardener."

The King went to the doorway and looked out onto his bare garden. "That's of no matter. Tell him I will pay all his debts and give him and his family new clothes. They will live in a cottage within my village. Go in haste and bring him and his family to the castle."

The messenger did as the King commanded. Within two weeks, the gardener and his family were in the castle. The King's steward met them and brought them to their cottage. "You will start in the garden tomorrow," said the steward. "Get settled today."

The next morning the gardener went to work. He tilled the land and planted seeds. Day after day he worked in the garden. The King would watch him and noticed how the gardener seem to love what he was doing.

Soon flowers, shrubs, and trees of every kind began to grow, including fruit trees. The garden flourished. It was beautiful and peaceful.

The King's heart leapt every time he looked at his garden. He called the gardener to the castle.

The gardener bowed his way into the throne room. "Your Majesty."

"Raise your head," said the King. "You are a worthy man. I admire your skill. No one was able to do what you have done with my garden. I am raising your wages and your wife will get a barrel of jewels each year."

The King motioned for the gardener to move closer. "I would appreciate a special favor in return. I want you to teach your children to become gardeners like you, your father, and your grandfather. They will take care of my garden when you are too old to do it yourself."

The gardener smiled. "Your Highness, it will be my honor. I think when you love what you do, it produces amazing results. My children have that love for gardening already. They will be honored to be royal gardeners!"

Questions

1. What does the King mean when he says, “I want someone with gardening in their blood”?
2. What do you think *tilled* means here: “He tilled the land and planted seeds”?
3. Why did the gardener feel he was unworthy to be the royal gardener?
4. Why was this gardener able to get the garden growing?