



Jesus desires all people to have abundant life (John 10:10), and there is no place where you can experience that more fully than in a garden! FARM STEW has been sharing our recipe for abundant life in Africa for years. Now, the time is right to strengthen America's families and communities too.

FARM STEW invites you to join us by taking the **He Said Grow** Course starting **Sunday, April 3 at 11:00 am CT**. In this virtual class, you and your family will be equipped with the tools you need to begin your gardening journey. Simply email HeSaidGrow@farmstew.org to express your interest!

Until then, here is a sneak preview of our first lesson!

God the First Farmer

Did you know that God was the first and best gardener in the universe? God valued cultivation so much that He created a beautiful garden in a land called Eden ("land of delight" in Hebrew) and put the first humans there to care for it. (Genesis 2:8, 15) Gardening was designed to be a labor of love, a gift from God to us for our enjoyment and to care for His world.

Even though our ancestors did not stay in that garden, God continued to encourage His people to garden. When they were captives and living in a foreign land, God instructed them to *"build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit."* (Jeremiah 29:5) God gave the hopeful promise to His people that they would be *"like a well-watered garden."* (Isaiah 58:11)

Jesus used garden parables throughout His ministry to show the hidden principles of the Kingdom of Heaven. He compares the productivity of four types of soil (Mark 4:3-8), and encourages listeners to cultivate their lives to make them produce *"good fruit"* (Mark 4:9-20). Jesus says, *"I am the vine"* (John 15:1-7) and explains how you can not bear any fruit apart from Him. Clearly, throughout the scripture, gardening images abound.



FARM STEW Facts | Humanity's Botanical Home

The garden is the only true place where humans are at home with God. There is no other place or time where humanity is complete in the Bible. Not only does the Bible begin (Genesis 2) and end (Revelation 22) with humanity in a garden, but the entire narrative is scattered throughout with garden imagery. In this place, humans and God come together. The tabernacle described in Deuteronomy and Solomon's temple are excellent examples of their extravagant carvings of animals/cherubim, trees, and flowers (Exodus 25:31; 1st Kings 6:18, 32; 1st Kings 7:20, 29, 36, 42). The garden, and later the tabernacle/temple, are the special places where heaven and earth meet.

Why Should You Have a Garden?

Gardening is a life-giving labor of love. While gardening, you and your family will be blessed with fresh air, exercise, and sunshine, and that's all before you harvest! Here are 3 great reasons to garden:

1. Gardens Produce Delicious, Nutrient-Dense Food

The nutrient content of homegrown food is often much higher than store-bought produce. The rich, full taste of homegrown tomatoes, for example, is indicative of a high nutritional value! If you can grow your own delicious and life-giving produce, why shouldn't you?

2. Gardens Can Provide an Abundant Harvest and Food Security

In many parts of the world, a large proportion of the population lacks the quality and quantity of food they need to thrive. In the United States, millions of people don't have access to fresh fruits and vegetables because of their finances or location. For many low-income, urban families, the local corner store is the primary food source. These stores generally stock highly processed foods, with little to no fresh fruits or vegetables available. A diet of processed foods suffers from excess sugar, salt, and fat and can lead to chronic diseases.

While the United States has been relatively stable the past 200 years, frequent disasters and emergencies can make obtaining food difficult. It's not a question of "if" emergencies will happen, but "when." Raising food in gardens for our families and others is a wonderful way to create food security.



3. Gardening Benefits Your Mental Health

There has been an alarming increase worldwide in mental health issues since 1915. Research shows that more people miss work due to depression than any other disease, and now over 60 million Americans suffer from mental health issues.

You can improve your brain simply by making better choices each day. What practical lifestyle habits can you do to protect your mental health? Keeping our hands busy, spending time in the sunlight, eating nutritious food, breathing open-air, and exercising are all medicine for both our mind and body. Amazingly, gardening incorporates them all!

Like what you read? Learn more about **FARM STEW USA** and **He Said Grow** by visiting www.farmstew.org or email HeSaidGrow@farmstew.org.

