

## Tending Your Inner Garden®

# The Seasons as a Model for Change

*“Never does nature say one thing and wisdom another.”*

—Juvenal

The seasons of nature teach us how to bring about and welcome change in our own lives. By reflecting on the lessons of Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall in the Tending Your Inner Garden program, we learn who we truly are and what is important to us, how to let go of what no longer nurtures us, and when we are ready to begin again. This learning comes from listening, from tuning into our own inner wisdom and our connection to a higher power or divine energy.

The seasons remind us of the continual cycles of birth, death and rebirth and prepare us to appreciate the role these cycles play in our own lives. Our personal growth, like the seasons, never stops.

These concepts are intrinsic to the Tending Your Inner Garden program and can be helpful in launching the Inner Garden year. Consider discussing these ideas at the beginning of each season. How do the members of your group view each of the seasons?

### WINTER

The season of winter provides the gift of dormancy, a time to shift from achieving and producing to being and resting. Our world has little appreciation for allowing a field—or a life—to remain fallow. Our desire to advance in our careers, save for retirement, and acquire material goods drives us to fill up every available moment of our lives with activity. Do we pay a price for this? Like the soil that is relentlessly cultivated and planted, our lives become depleted of nutrients they need to grow.

When we don't create time and space for our dreams, ideas, insights and memories to arise, without the need to produce immediate results, we fail to learn who we really are. That essential knowledge invites us to make life changes that truly suit us.

### SPRING

During the spring of the year, farmers watch the weather carefully, looking for the right moment to return to the fields, plow the soil and plant the seeds of this year's crops. They cannot rely solely on the calendar in this process; they must note signs around them that spring has arrived. In tending our inner gardens, knowing when to begin something new, when to plant the seeds of our own personal growth, requires this same sensitivity and awareness.

By welcoming dormancy, we resurrect old memories and interests, generate new ideas and envision a desirable future. In these inner ruminations lie the potential seeds of our own growth. What do we decide to plant? How do we know if it has genuine potential to grow? How do we create a rich environment for these seeds and nurture them into maturity? How do we prevent fear from choking off this tender young part of ourselves that is emerging?

## SUMMER

The season of summer teaches us that in the midst of rapid growth, we must be good managers of our personal resources, remaining open to new possibilities yet not losing focus of our goals. In our search for meaning and life satisfaction, summer reminds us to pay attention to what is growing in our lives. Is this growth fulfilling our new and emerging life purpose? Expressing that life purpose in a personal mission statement helps us refine our life intentions and guides our actions.

Summer brings with it weeds, as well as the plants we have nurtured. As inner gardeners, we face unexpected developments and adjust our plans accordingly. We accept that even though our intentions are clear and our actions align with those intentions, we cannot always control the outcome of our efforts.

## FALL

During fall, growth slows down and eventually stops, allowing time to harvest the bounty we have produced. In our inner garden, this bounty may be new insights, enhanced relationships, improved skills, new career opportunities, or rewarding leisure pursuits. By reflecting on the ripening of our lives and expressing gratitude, we deepen our appreciation for the gifts we have been given and our connection with others and the world at large. We experience the growth of our own wisdom and value.

Fall is a time to integrate what we have learned and assess the progress of our lives. Who are we becoming? How have we changed over the seasons? Are we expressing our true selves? Discovering and revealing who we truly are is the work of an entire lifetime. As autumn comes to a close, we prepare to rest, knowing that our cyclical work as gardeners of our own spirit and soul will begin again.

