

The Alternative Kitchen Garden

Christmas 2008 Special Edition:

Christmas Eve in the Garden



It was Christmas Eve, and everything in the garden was asleep – except for the garden itself. The garden was thinking about how much joy its friends and visitors had brought over the year.

There were all the birds, who raised their families in and around the garden, and who came every morning to sing their songs. And they were just as welcome for the rest of the day, too, as they ate weed seeds and pests, and left little parcels of fertiliser to help the garden grow. It would be much less of a garden without the birds.

And there were other friends the garden thought about, although they didn't visit in the winter. They were tucked away in their homes to stay warm. The hedgehog was the largest, patrolling the garden every night on the lookout for slugs and snails. And the frogs and toads did the same job, in the damp and shady areas of the garden.

And the garden missed the bees, who filled every sunny day with their friendly buzz and worked so hard to make sure that all the flowers were pollinated. The garden loved all the bees – the ones that visited from hives and brought their friends, and the solitary ones that lived on their own in the garden.

The garden was also grateful for things that it knew not all gardens had. This garden was home to a pair of chickens, who clucked and scratched and hopped around and made the garden a lively place. And it had a gardener, who came most days to make sure the weeds were under control, and the pests, and to plant plants, trim hedges, and turn the garden's rubbish into compost and put it back in the soil.

And as the garden thought about all the things it was grateful for, and all the good friends who came to visit, it was suddenly sad because all of these gifts were freely

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given, every day of the year, and the garden had nothing to give in return. Even tomorrow, on Christmas Day, the garden had nothing to give but itself. And so the garden sat quietly, through the night, and was sad.

But at midnight, when Christmas began, things started stirring in the garden. First to awaken was the hedgehog, who woke up from his winter nap to thank the garden for providing a home all year, and a cosy pile of leaves under the hedge when it was time to hibernate. The hedgehog went back to sleep, and wouldn't be seen again until spring.

And when the hedgehog had gone back to sleep, and the garden was alone again, it thought back to all of its other friends who brought so many gifts, and was worried again.

Just before dawn, the frogs and toads woke up from their winter naps and crawled out of their homes to thank the garden for giving them damp and shady places to live when the weather was hot and dry, and for an endless supply of tasty things to eat. It was too cold for them to stay long, and the garden was sorry to see them go.

But before the garden had a chance to be lonely again, it was dawn and the birds woke up and started singing their thanks for their homes in the hedge, the food that they ate and the trees that allowed them to perch safely outside the reach of the neighbourhood cats. And they sang and they sang as they flew around the garden and gathered their breakfast.

It wasn't warm in the garden, it was foggy and cold, but the bees came out of their hives to say thank you for the pollen and the nectar they used to make their honey. And all the bees buzzed quietly, to remind the garden that they would be back when the weather turned warm. And then they went back to sleep as well.

And then it really was Christmas morning, and the gardener came outside to let the chickens out to eat their breakfast, and they squawked their thanks for the bugs and beasties that they liked to eat, and the grassy weeds they were so fond of.

But the garden was still worried, because although nearly all of its friends were grateful for the gifts it had given them, the gardener was here and he had nothing for her. And it was winter, and the garden didn't even look its best – all of the flowers had faded and there wasn't much to pick in the vegetable garden.

The gardener spent a few minutes taking care of the chickens, and feeding them Christmas treats, and then turned to go back inside into the warm house. The garden was sorry to see her go, but just as she reached the door something wonderful happened. The sun came out from behind the clouds and lit up the garden. And another of the garden's friends – Jack Frost – had come and gone in the night without saying a word and left his gift in secret. All around the garden, leaves and twigs and even the ground itself were covered in thick, white frost. And it shone in the sunlight and sparkled as if everything in the garden were made of jewels. And the gardener

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stood and stared, and brought everyone outside to see the beautiful sight. And she took photos of the frosty garden to remind herself how lovely it was.

And when everyone had gone back inside, to open their presents and eat their Christmas dinner, the garden was alone again. But this time it wasn't sad at all, because it had good friends all year and plenty of gifts to share with them.

Christmas Eve in the Garden was written and read by Emma Cooper.
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