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Montessori and the Bending of Twigs

Montessori education is a work of bending twigs – not breaking, not crushing, not deforming but bending to achieve its best. This kind of action takes time and patience and understanding. What then is the difference between bending and forcing? In our case a lot of it depends on our understanding, attitude and motivation. The garden offers us a good analogy. Different plants offer different scenarios for growth and maturity. There are plants well suited for hanging baskets because it is in their nature to grow down. There are other plants that are great for wall climbing – again their nature. Ground covering plants are very different than hedges. And there are hedge plants that can be formed into unique shapes while others are utilitarian.

Some plants grow from bulbs, others from seeds, others can grow from cuttings each offer a unique starting point – much like our children. Some flowers grow singly others grow in bunches. How do your children work best – by themselves or in a group?

There are flowering bushes while other bushes remain green. There are plants that exhibit every leaf shape of the botany cabinet. Sound like your environment? We have come to experience and expect that most plants are green – and many are. And those green plants exhibit a palette of green that is a bouquet all by itself. But then you come to experience plants with variegated leaves – multi colored. And then you encounter the plants that have yellow leaves (not dead yellow) and then there are the scarlet leaved plants and the deep purple hues each of these force us to consider something other than our expectation of only green-leaved plants.

Then there are the plants that produce berries – edible and non-edible, trees for shade and for a nutty harvest. Plants that produce quickly in a season – tomato plants and others that wait for the fall harvest. An apple tree is not a single season producer but requires time (and pruning) for it to offer a full harvest. Bending and pruning are not the same as breaking for there is a purposeful intentionality in the actions and not random destruction.

A hallmark of Montessori is the bending of independence towards self-discipline. The continued correct use of independence creates an inner discipline which gives results that are not attained by external force. The positive bent becomes a set of productive outcomes.

The classroom offers new vistas as we experience children as unique as our garden. The discovery – the delight in the variation is a continual feast of joy and amazement along with a profound sense of our part in the “bending of twigs.”