

Finding the Transcendent in Botany



Transcendent: Above and beyond normal/human physical experience

Discovering the Transcendent in Botany

Why do all vegetables not look like broccoli? (Or taste like it.)

Why are there 18 leaf shapes in the botany cabinet?

Why? Why? Why? (The favorite question of 3 year-olds.) 😊

A simple take-away highlights the creativity of God.

Did I say simple? There is nothing simple in creativity – or botany. Creativity is imbued with the very multi-faceted essence of God's personality. In our world's hurry to acquire acknowledge – spatulate, linear, reniform, orbicular etc. we miss the transcendent wonder of creation. As teachers we are tasked to teach knowledge when our eternal mandate is to share wisdom. And it is easy to overlook wisdom learning in the hurried world around us where quantity is more important than quality.

What is the indirect, indirect aim of the botany cabinet? No, that is not a typo. We know that the first indirect aim is preparing the hand for writing. But what is the indirect, indirect aim? Here begins the wonder of training eyes to see. (A favorite phrase of Jesus – having eyes to see and ears to hear.) Here begins the transcendent (if we have eyes to see.)

What might you creatively say about the botany cabinet? "Look at the multiplicity of shapes." Unfortunately, the word diversity has been ruined by contemporary society. So, what does the multiplicity of shapes teach our children (and us?) To look around and see! They are not just leaves but exquisite individualized creations – just like us. Yes, they are similar but different – just like us. And can you go outside and find them? Can you find the trees, bushes and plants from which they come? Can you name them?

Now from leaves can you make the jump to flowers? Discovery and creativity are all around us – if we look. And when we look – there is a profound awe of God's creativity displayed everywhere. Seemingly, the direct aim of flowers is to provide for pollination. And the bees that bless the flowers also bless the food crops that

provide for us which could be the indirect aim. And the indirect, indirect aim? While I don't "hear" flowers, I can touch them, smell them, see them and even taste them, (there are edible flowers.) This indirect aim (I really want to believe that it is God's absolute direct aim) gives us such an emotional, sensorial experience of His absolute creativity and we pass by it with "eyes that don't see" and lips that don't praise Him.)

Flowers grow on trees, grow on bushes, grow on vines, grow as individual plants, grow in bunches, grow low to the ground, grow tall, climb, grow downwards, grow perennially, annually, bloom for a day, or only bloom at night, or eleven o'clock in the morning or four in the afternoon. They grow from bulbs, from seeds. They span the universe of quasi "metal inset" shapes and match an even greater variety of colors than the rainbow. Their fragrances are distinct from delicate to overpowering or even none at all.

And all of this is given just for our pleasure – and it will be even more beautiful in heaven.

We will save fruits and vegetables for another day. 😊

Transcendence is everywhere because God is everywhere – if we look.