

Growing Time



by Michelle Hardaway



Every Wednesday afternoon, Ms. Ramirez's seventh-grade class headed somewhere different. They walked outside to the school's community garden.

KeKe laughed. "I hope tomatoes appreciate all this hard work."

Joe grinned. "If they don't, I'm sending them a bill."
The whole class laughed.



Before anyone picked up a shovel, Ms. Ramirez held up an old garden clock. 'It tells time,' Taylor said. 'It does,' Ms. Ramirez replied. 'But gardens tell time too.' She pointed toward tiny sprouts. 'Plants grow one day at a time. You can't rush them. Nature has its own clock.'



Ms. Ramirez showed the class different seeds. "Every plant has the right season to grow," she explained. "If you plant at the wrong time, it struggles. The same is true for people. There are seasons for learning... for growing... for helping... and for leading." The students became unusually quiet.



One afternoon, Ms. Ramirez made an announcement. 'This year's harvest will be donated to families in our community.' KeKe smiled. 'So someone else gets to enjoy what we grew?' Taylor looked at the rows of vegetables. 'This suddenly feels much bigger than school.'



From that day forward, the four friends couldn't wait for gardening class. They learned which vegetables loved cool weather. Which herbs could flavor healthy meals.

Joe joked, "I never knew leaves could have so many jobs." Everyone laughed.



The garden needed attention every day.
Pull weeds. Water carefully. Watch for insects.
Check the soil.
But then Rob noticed something.
"The plants grow a little every day... just like we do."
The others smiled. He was right.



As weeks passed, the garden became one of everyone's favorite places. Friends laughed while planting rows of vegetables. Families visited during harvest days.

**The students weren't just growing food.
They were growing friendships. Patience.
Teamwork. Responsibility.**



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That afternoon, the four friends sat together beside the garden. "What if every school had a garden?" Rob asked. "What if families learned to grow their own food?" Joe added. Taylor smiled. "Maybe someday... we can help make that happen." They were planting ideas for the future.



The school held a Harvest Festival.
Parents and neighbors came.
The four friends proudly explained what they had learned.
One little boy asked Joe, “Did all this really start from tiny seeds?”
Joe smiled. “So do big dreams.”



Ms. Ramirez gathered everyone one last time.
She held up the clock.

“You learned that the greatest things in life take time.
And when we use our time to help others... everyone grows.”
The four friends looked at each other and smiled.
That lesson would stay with them forever.



Time is one of life's greatest gifts, and like a garden, the best things take patience, care, and consistency to grow. When you spend your time learning, serving others, and planting seeds of kindness, your efforts can feed not only yourself but your family, friends, and community.

The seeds you plant today can become tomorrow's harvest of hope.

ISBN 978-1-963480-56-7



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