

# Parable of the Beautiful Town

The inspiration for this parable was a discussion which asked:  
“ *are there any differences between Ideas and Suggestions?* ”

My contribution was to propose this metaphor:

*...that suggestions are seeds, ideas are seeds that have sprouted, and innovations are plants in full bloom.*

This parable based on that metaphor. It has the current financial crisis in mind and I hope it prompts you to think about how you might respond.

I 'd like to acknowledge contributions from the following people who provided elements for this story during the original discussion:

[Prakasan Kappoth](#), Senior Manager KM, Systematic Innovation Facilitator & Innovation Consultant at [MindTree](#);


[Kevin Paylow](#), Innovation, Knowledge Management & Strategy Activist;

[Nigel Collin](#), Business Creativity Speaker & Consultant;

[Grant Bosnick](#), Chief Executive Thinker at YES ( Your Empowering Solution ); and

[Marian Thier](#), Owner, [Expanding Thought](#), and Professional Training & Coaching Consultant.

# Parable of the Beautiful Town



There was once a beautiful town. It was admired by all, known for the beauty and bounty of its gardens. Visitors came and marvelled at its exquisite flowers, quietly seduced by their scent. The trees were magnificent, tall and straight, producing fine rich grains. Its fields bountiful with all types of fruits, vegetables and herbs, enough to feed the whole town and sought by gourmets across the land.

Other towns sent representatives to study the beautiful town and learn its ways. The town had been beautiful for so long that the Mayor and his advisors could not remember how it had come to be so. Perhaps it was just luck they thought.

Hard times fell upon the kingdoms. Times became hard for the beautiful town too. The Mayor called his advisors, people experienced in money and power.

The advisors told the Mayor to cut cost, to cut those things not needed to run the town. So, they dismissed the town 's gardeners thinking "Why do we need them? We are the Lucky Town".

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The people of the town worried about the Mayor's decision. They knew in their hearts that the beauty of the town was due to their gardens. They felt great sadness at the loss of the gardeners. They feared for their future.

It didn't take long for the gardens to start to die. Crops began to fail and tall trees became brittle and broken. Colour disappeared from the town as it turned brown and grey.

The people of the town met each day and talked. What was to happen to their town? They wondered if there was anything they could do. They thought that flowers and trees and vegetables grew from seeds. Many had lived in the town all their lives and had seen the gardeners working with them many times.

They decided that they would collect as many seeds as they could and plant them themselves. They spent a day searching for as many seeds as they could find. Once they had them together they went for a walk through the town. Wherever they saw a dying garden they tossed in some seeds hoping they could get something to grow there again.

After a while some green seedlings pushed through, and an occasional flower appeared. There was hope, hope that the decaying gardens would have new life. This heartened the townspeople; until the new seedlings started to die too.

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The Mayor had been watching. He had seen his beautiful town turn to a sad grey place. He knew he had taken the heart out of the town. He had seen the people do their best but he could now see their hope dying too.


He felt alone. His advisors had left long ago, gone in search of other towns that offered prestige that his once had. He sat down and cried.

The Mayor slept badly that night. He woke early, thinking of his grandfather. He lay in his bed for a while warmed by boyhood memories of visits with his grandparents. He remembered each day he would join his grandfather in the garden. He remembered planting seeds into small containers, keeping them moist and warm. He remembered picking through seedlings sprouted from seeds sown at his last visit, and planting out the best. He remembered holding his grandmother's hand as they walked in the sunshine harvesting sweet fruit to eat in the shade of the trees. He closed his eyes - remembering.

That day he walked about the town. He thanked everyone he saw for trying to fix the problem that he had created. He asked them if they would give him a chance to put it right.

After dark he visited as many of the old gardeners that he could find. They talked through the night and when the sun rose the next morning they had a plan.

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The Mayor called the townspeople together. He said he was sorry and he knew the mistakes he had made. He knew that he had forgotten what had made the town beautiful in the first place. He knew that his advisors had never known. He knew that losing the gardeners had almost killed their town.

He told them that he knew how much everyone cared and that this time things would be different. This time the gardeners would be teachers and share their knowledge with everyone.

They started immediately. The gardeners sent the people of the town out to search for any seeds or seedlings that they could find. When they returned they picked the best and strongest; and went to work. This time they had places for flowers, places for vegetables and herbs, places for fruit trees, and places for shade and for timber trees.

Under the guidance of the gardeners everyone learned the plan. The townspeople quickly understood the need to prepare the ground carefully to suit each type of plant. They learned how to tend the gardens, keeping out the pests and weeds. The gardeners were careful teachers and the people willing students.

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They learned that some plants needed special care while others just needed the right place. They learned that they could not do everything at once and that some things could only be done at certain times. They learned that not every seed would sprout and that not every seedling would be strong enough to survive.

They also learned that the gardens needed constant care and that everyone could contribute. Most of all they learned from each other, that everyone 's effort makes a difference.

The Mayor of the town learned something too. This time, with the help of the gardeners, he had been careful. He now understood that everyone made the town beautiful.

Very quickly the town came back to life. The flowers bloomed, the trees stood strong and green. And there was once again more food that the town could use.

News spread and representatives of other towns again came to see. Other towns where still in hard times and wanted to know how this town was so beautiful and bountiful. This time the Mayor and his new advisors (the gardeners) could tell them.