

Auntie Lila's Garden

— Annie Sommerville-Hall

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Down a little lane and past some houses and tall trees there lived a gardener. This old Auntie had been tending her garden for many years and it had grown. She had fine tall blueberry bushes and fruit trees that were gnarled and squatty, and a large garden full of vegetables, herbs and flowers.

She made sure her plants had rich compost and plenty of water, and that they were planted in just the right places to soak up the sun.

Butterflies and ladybugs loved Auntie Lila's garden. They flew all around adding color and life. They went from plant to plant, flower to flower, and the pollen that went with them helped the flowers and the plants to grow. Bumblebees came to her garden, too. They collected pollen and as they went, their legs became so full of pollen that they almost seemed too heavy to fly.

When Auntie Lila came to check on her blueberries and fruit trees she could see some fruit starting to grow; small, at first, and then into the summer season, they grew ripe and juicy.

The children who lived nearby loved to visit her. They came with their garden gloves and helped her weed, and dig, and pick the fruit and vegetables.

In the heat of the summer, they came and helped her pick the ripe blueberries. They picked the fruit off the bushes. They brought the blueberries into Auntie Lila's kitchen and helped her make the dough for the pie crust and added the juicy berries. They only made two pies, but OH!, they were delicious!

Out in the garden, the butterflies and bumblebees and ladybugs flew from plant to plant. There was a gentle wind and it blew them all into the same area of the garden together.

"How can we help Auntie and her garden?" the butterflies and bumblebees and ladybugs all wondered. "She gives it so much love and attention, but she needs help from the honeybees, too."

They all agreed to spread the word to neighboring gardens and farms and forests that honeybees were welcome and wanted there.

Summer went by and autumn came, with a harvest of a few apples. Winter came and Auntie Lila made sure her plants were bedded down with leaves and mulch.

Spring arrived and new leaves, blossoms, and life came to the garden. One early spring day, she came out to work in her garden and there before her was a swarm of honeybees!



Such a sight! It was a cluster of honeybees looking for a new home. She had a hive! They had arrived! She collected what she needed and came back out to the bees. She laid a sheet carefully out under the swarm. She put an empty hive box right under them. She took a rope and very carefully tied it to the branch where the swarm was clustered all together, buzzing loudly. She took hold of the rope and took a deep breath and then yanked quickly on the rope.

The bees dropped. Some bees went into the box, and some on the sheet, and some on her! She stood very still and watched. There was a small cluster of bees in the box. They were all around the queen bee, taking good care of her. The other bees were marching in a line, one after another, right into the hive box. They looked like a royal parade.

The bees set up house in no time. They had a new home. When all the bees were inside, Auntie put the top on her new hive. Now her garden was so busy! From dawn to dusk the bees went from blossom to blossom, from plant to plant, gathering pollen and nectar and making honey.

The butterflies, bumblebees and ladybugs were glad for the company. That spring there was more fruit on

the trees, more vegetables in the garden, and more blueberries on the bushes than ever before.

In the heat of the summer, the children came to harvest the blueberries and brought their friends. They picked and picked and picked! So many blueberries were brought into the kitchen and so many pies were made, all sweetened with golden honey! OH! They were delicious!

After the children had eaten, they went with Auntie Lila into the garden. They played and sang. The garden hummed and buzzed. The butterflies and ladybugs flew all around. The garden was so much happier with the honeybees and it was especially happy because it was full of children. ♦

Annie Sommerville-Hall *has been an early childhood teacher at the Waldorf School of Atlanta since 1993 in both the kindergarten and nursery. Each year with the parents and children in her class, she collaboratively sews a quilt on a theme, "following a thread" just like a story can! She enjoys weaving stories from her experience in the world around her, and from the growth and understanding that the children bring.*