

# Creating space for Blessed Mother in your garden

May is the month of Mary and a perfect time to build a shrine to her outside your home.

This spring, why not plant a Mary garden especially dedicated to her youth and Immaculate Conception?

"Mary gardens" are small grounds consisting of flowers and plants ascribed by legend as special tributes to the Blessed Virgin. The custom began in medieval times and was revived during the middle of the last century. Mary gardens combine nature with tradition to pay tribute to the Virgin and to illustrate Church teaching about her.

Those plants whose names and symbolism emphasize the nativity, childhood and Immaculate Conception of the Virgin can be used to create a special garden in honour of the young Mary. This can be a special spot for reflection and contemplation of Mary's willingness to do God's will at all times in her life.

A statue or other image of Mary occupies the place of honour in a Mary garden. Traditional statuary has largely ignored representations of her childhood, but a statue of the young Mary with St. Ann or another depiction of her could be used.

## Her presence

Part of the fun of this project is the research to find plants with names and legends that call to mind Mary's childhood and which grow well in your area. Apartment dwellers can create their own version of a Mary garden by making a dish garden.



For example, the Italian aster is known as Mary's birthday flower because it normally blooms near the feast of Mary's nativity. The hyacinth lily among thorns is a lovely and very fragrant reminder of the Immaculate Conception.

In medieval England, the young Mary was called Maid or Maiden, and this title expressed a special veneration of her purity and beauty. It was reflected in the names of many flowers and plants. Asparagus fern is commonly called maiden hair fern.

One of the most widely known and cultivated flowers honoring the youthful Mary is the Maiden's Blush Rose. Also known as the incarnation rose, these are cultivars of the *rosa alba*.

In addition to flowers from popular oral traditions are a great number of plants from Scripture, seen by the Church Fathers as symbolizing the Immaculate Conception. These include lily among thorns, exalted cedar, rose plant, fair olive tree, lily of the valley and rose of Sharon, among others.

Hundreds of other plants are connected with the Virgin. An old legend says that Mary's bud, or marigolds, adorned the dresses of the Virgin. The snowdrop is a popular emblem of Mary's purity and freedom from sin. Violets are a symbol of Mary's humility, and legend says they blossomed outside her window at the Annunciation. When the angel left, he blessed the little flowers, giving them the most beautiful fragrance of all plants.



Source: Our Sunday Visitor Newsweekly, Ann Ball author.

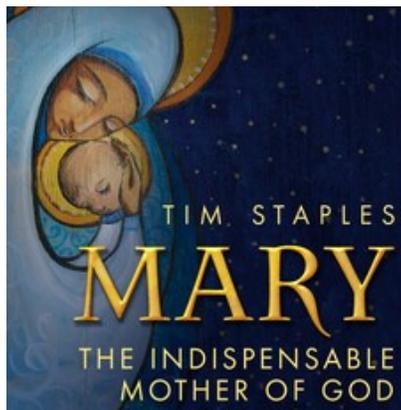
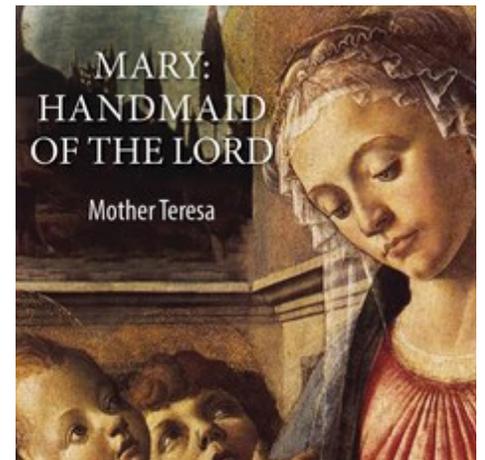
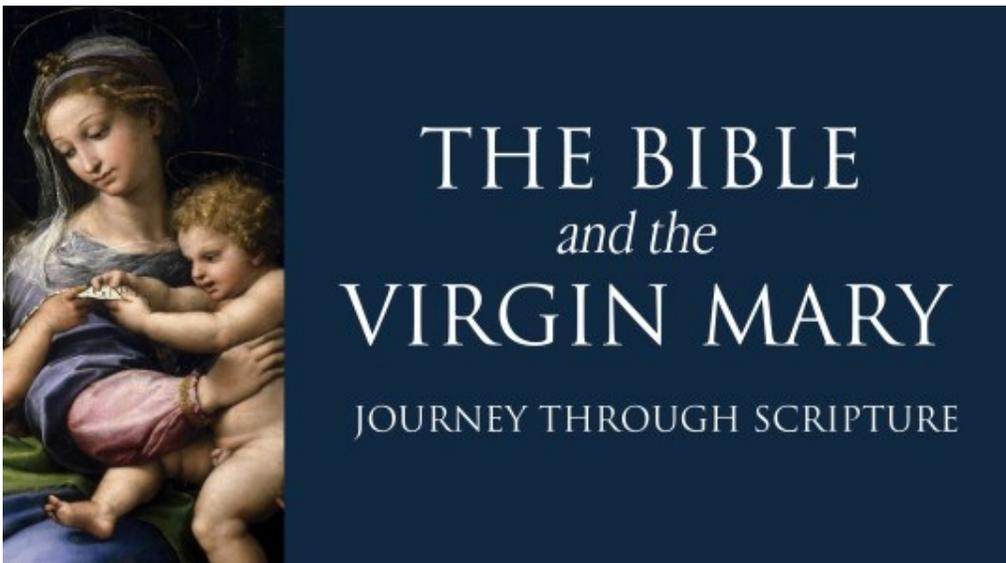
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