

AUGUST 31

Yesterday was the Feast Day of St. Fiacre, the patron saint of gardeners, florists, and herbalists.

If your garden is doing particularly well this year, you can thank St. Fiacre, the patron saint of gardens. If it isn't—well, perhaps you could ask this helpful saint to lend a hand.



The Tale of St. Fiacre

Fiacre lived in the seventh century. He was raised in an Irish monastery, where he learned to use healing herbs. He wanted to be a hermit, but his skill and knowledge brought people to him, so he went to France in search of solitude, taking up residence in a cave near a spring. He needed a garden (who doesn't?) so he asked a nearby bishop, St. Faro of Meaux, for land. The bishop gave him as much garden space as he could plow in a day. The next morning, it is said, Fiacre chose his spot and began to walk around it, dragging his spade behind him. Magically, wherever his spade touched, trees toppled, bushes were uprooted, the soil was turned over, and the rocks were plucked out. The local folk, frightened, called it sorcery, but the bishop declared Fiacre's garden a miracle. (Personally, I suspect that the bishop had some gardening work of his own that needed to be done.) Fiacre's garden, always in bloom and always beautifully tended, became a place of pilgrimage. His healing herbs were eagerly sought, and his culinary herbs were used to flavor food that was offered to the poor.



To invite blessings to your garden, you might purchase a small statue of this gardener's saint and put it in a quiet corner, where you can enjoy the meditative silence Fiacre sought in his own garden. Surround it with such healing herbs as sage, thyme, mint, fennel, dill, and St. John's wort, herbs that Fiacre would have known and used.

The growing of the first few herbs is the discovery of a whole new world of garden pleasure and human meaning, but it is when a gardener has tried a few, liked them and been liked by them and would go on that the full adventure begins. —Henry Beston, Herbs and the Earth