

# Helping Little Hearts Heal

## A Summer Memory Garden Guide

*A gentle, hands-on journey for families  
navigating grief together.*





## Love Continues to Grow

Summer is a time for sunshine and play, but for a child missing someone special, the quiet days can sometimes feel a bit heavy. Grief doesn't take a summer vacation.

Creating a *Memory Garden* is a gentle, hands-on way for children to:

- Express their changing feelings.
- Honour their loved one in a dedicated space.
- See the beauty of life and nature continuing to grow.

# Understanding the “Puddles” of Grief

Children often process loss in “puddles.” They may be very sad one moment and want to go play outside the next. This intermittent processing is entirely natural and healthy.

## *The Weather of Feelings*

Let them know their feelings are like the weather—they change, and that is perfectly okay.



## *Validate Everything*

“I’m feeling a little sad today. It’s okay if you feel sad, too, or if you just want to play. I’m here for whichever one you need.”


# Finding the Right Words



## Words to Try

(Honest & Simple)

“Their body stopped working and the doctors couldn’t fix it. It means they can’t breathe or talk anymore.”



## Words to Avoid

(Confusing Euphemisms)

“They passed away,” “They went to sleep,” or “We lost them.”  
(Children may wonder when they will wake up or if they can be ‘found.’)

## The “Follow Their Lead” Rule

- You don’t have to have a “big talk” all at once. Use the garden as a natural bridge.
- Try asking: “If this flower could tell [Name] one thing today, what do you think it would say?”
- Remember: It is perfectly okay to say “I don’t know” to big questions.

# Activity 1: Painted Memory Stones

Rocks are strong and lasting—just like our love for the people we miss.

## What You'll Need:



- Smooth river rocks from the yard



- Acrylic paints or outdoor paint pens



- A bowl of soapy water & towel

- Clear outdoor sealant (optional)



# Activity 2: Planting Seeds of Hope

Watching a flower grow from a tiny seed is a powerful lesson in nature's cycle.

## What You'll Need:



- A packet of hardy wildflower or sunflower seeds



- A small patch of soil or large flower pot



- A watering can

## How to Do It:



- **Prepare the Earth:** Clear weeds and loosen the soil together.



- **The "Wish" Planting:** As they drop seeds into the soil, encourage them to say a favourite memory or a "thank you" to their loved one.



- **Water and Wait:** Give the seeds a gentle drink. Remind them that just like flowers, our hearts need time, sunshine, and care to feel better.

- **Watch it Grow:** Check on them all summer. When they bloom, they are a living tribute.



# Activity 3: Nature Scavenger Hunt

Find “signs” and connections to your loved one in the world around you.



## Something Soft

To remind you of a kind word or a warm hug.



## Something Bright

To remind you of a happy memory or a time you laughed together.



## A Unique Leaf

Because every person is special and no one else is exactly like them.



## Something Strong

Like a sturdy stick, to remind you that you are brave.



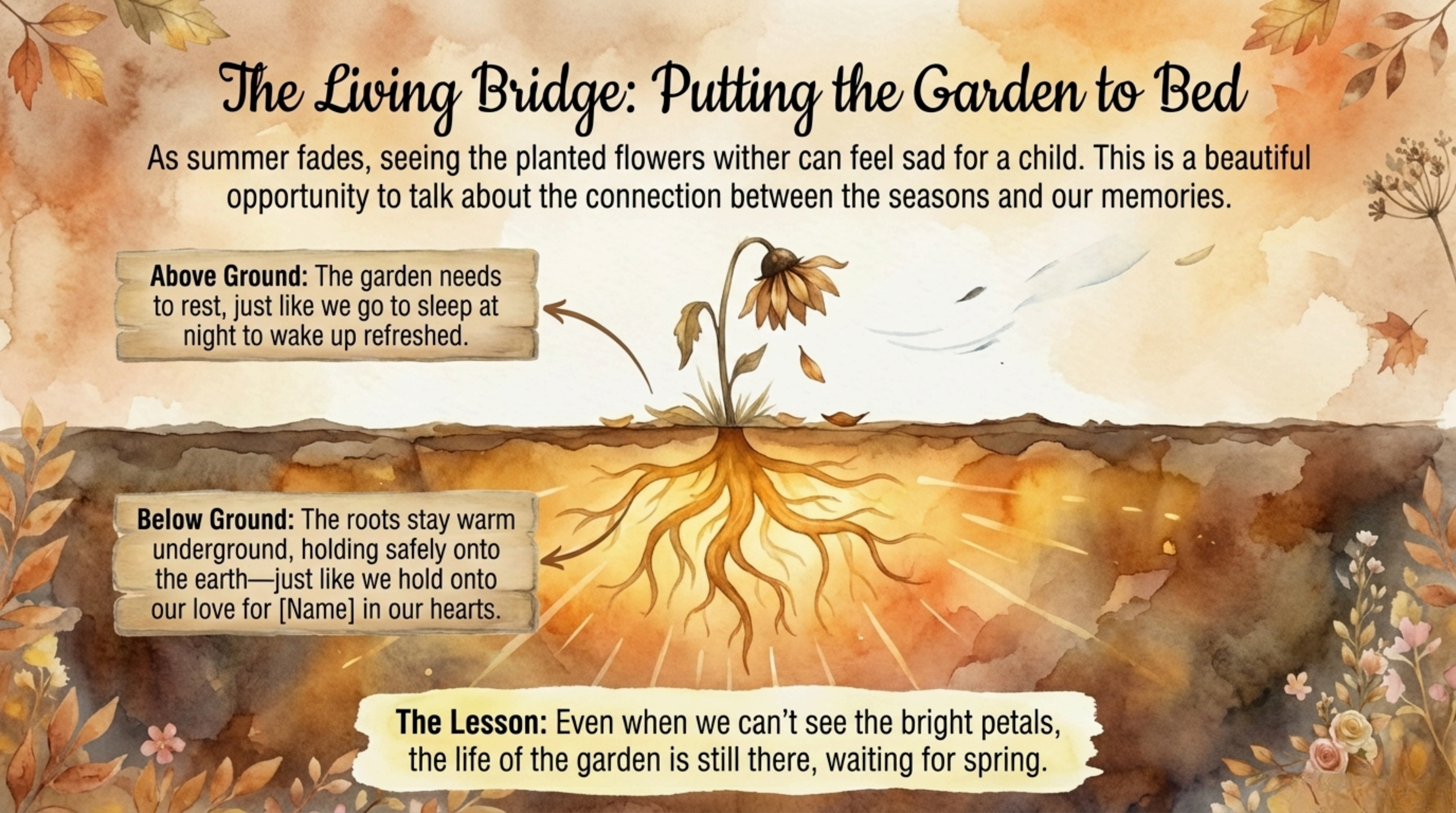
## A Sound in Nature

Listen for the wind or a bird. Imagine it's a little “hello.”

**A Note for Parents:** There is no “right” way to grieve. Whether they want to talk or search in silence, simply being present with them in the sunshine is powerful support.

# The Living Bridge: Putting the Garden to Bed

As summer fades, seeing the planted flowers wither can feel sad for a child. This is a beautiful opportunity to talk about the connection between the seasons and our memories.



**Above Ground:** The garden needs to rest, just like we go to sleep at night to wake up refreshed.

**Below Ground:** The roots stay warm underground, holding safely onto the earth—just like we hold onto our love for [Name] in our hearts.

**The Lesson:** Even when we can't see the bright petals, the life of the garden is still there, waiting for spring.

# The 'Garden Treasures' Memory Jar

Bringing a piece of your summer sanctuary indoors before the first frost.



## What You'll Need:

- A clean glass or plastic jar with a lid
- Ribbon or twine
- Small treasures from the garden

## How to Create It:

### How to Create It:

1. **Harvest the Memories:** Go out one last time. Choose a unique pebble, a dried sunflower seed pod, or colourful fall leaves.
2. **The Soil of Home:** Add a small layer of sand or dried garden soil to the bottom as a “foundation.”
3. **Arrange the Treasures:** Place items inside. Add a small photo or a tiny note with a favourite memory.
4. **Seal with Love:** Tie a ribbon. Tell your child, “Whenever you miss the garden this winter, hold this jar and remember the sunshine we shared.”

**Why This Helps:** It eases the “secondary loss” of the outdoor space, giving them a tactile connection to keep on a bedside table all winter.

# The Seasons of Love

While things in nature change and go through cycles, the memories and love we share are something we can keep safe and close, no matter the season.

**Summer Creation:**  
Love blooms in the sun.

**Spring Renewal:**  
Love continues to grow.

**Winter Preservation:**  
Love is kept safe inside.

**Autumn Rest:**  
Love holds tightly to the roots.

*The seasons change,  
but the treasures of our  
hearts remain forever.*





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