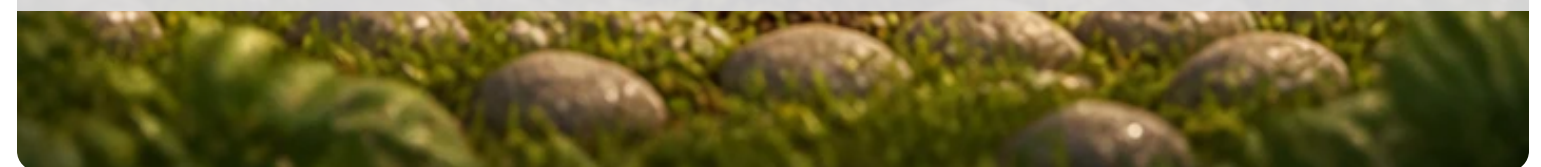




Oliver's Garden Through the Year

Petrus du toit





Oliver stands in a dusty corner of his backyard wearing a floppy straw hat and holding a small silver trowel. He looks at the bare earth with a big smile, imagining the colorful world he is about to create with his own two hands.



Small brown seeds tumble from Oliver's palm into neat little trenches in the soft, dark soil. He carefully covers them with a warm blanket of earth, whispering a secret encouragement for them to wake up soon.



A gentle spring rain begins to fall, and Oliver watches through the window as the raindrops dance on the garden bed. Tiny, bright green shoots start to poke their heads through the mud, reaching up to say hello to the gray sky.



The summer sun shines brightly, turning the garden into a lush jungle of deep green leaves and twisting vines. Oliver carries a heavy blue watering can, carefully giving every thirsty plant a refreshing drink in the morning heat.



Giant sunflowers now tower over Oliver, their golden faces following the sun across the bright blue sky. He reaches into the greenery to find crunchy snap peas and juicy red tomatoes, filling his wooden basket with the treasures of summer.



Bright butterflies and fuzzy bumblebees flutter between the colorful blossoms, busy with their important work. Oliver sits quietly on a garden stone, watching the tiny creatures help his garden thrive under the warm afternoon sun.



The air turns crisp and the leaves on the big oak tree change to brilliant shades of orange and gold. Oliver harvests the very last of the round, heavy pumpkins, feeling the cool autumn breeze tickle his cheeks.



Oliver rakes the fallen leaves into crunchy piles and spreads a thick layer of mulch over his garden beds. He tucks the earth in for a long sleep, making sure the roots stay warm while the world begins to turn chilly.



A soft white blanket of snow covers the garden, turning the backyard into a silent and peaceful winter wonderland. Oliver hangs a feeder filled with seeds for the hungry birds, watching a bright red cardinal land near the sleeping plants.



Inside his cozy house, Oliver sits by the fireplace looking at colorful pictures in a new seed catalog. He dreams of the giant pumpkins and tall flowers he will plant when the snow melts and the magic of spring returns once more.