

## Thinning out for better growth

Written by gothenburgtimes  
Thursday, 08 June 2017 15:51 -

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By Roxanne Converse-Whiting

I gazed down upon the plush growth of little green plants with such pride and satisfaction. Having planted the seeds, watered the soil, protected tender sprouts from the cold, and treasured each stage of growth, I felt a sense of nurturing attachment to the miracle of which I had been a part. How could I possibly begin to pull up and discard any of them, especially those bearing small blossoms? My mind resisted and my will bristled. Surely, I could leave them all and they would be fine.

“Fine” is what the young plants would be even if slightly stunted in growth, but certainly they would not be flourishing and growing to their fullest potential of beauty. Slowly and with resistance, I began to pull the smallest plants from the soil. I knew it was not enough. I pulled plants with blooms and some with long roots that ran deep. The hesitation and sadness weighed heavy on me, yet I began to see the space I was creating. My heart lightened as I realized the freedom with which the remaining plants would have the space to grow and flourish.

My life is like that pot of plush growth. Days are filled to the brim with tasks on lists that often spill over into next days. I often run from one commitment and scheduled activity to the next with little or no space in between. Finding myself exhausted, I collapse in bed late at night and hit snooze reluctant to get up in the morning. Fleeting moments of free time are snatched up with social media and texting. Saying immediate “yeses” to everything and “no” to very little, I delude myself into thinking that I can get it all done and make everyone happy. With constant busyness, I multi-task while being proud of my ability to accomplish so much, but am not fully present or giving my undivided attention to any task or any one. I enter awareness like one entering a room for the first time. Life is “fine,” but is it flourishing with beauty and fullest growth?

Slowly and with resistance, I begin to say “no” to new requests or to give myself the time to

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decide whether to offer a “yes.” However, I am aware that this is not enough. I let go of activities and service that appear to be producing something good, and I release scheduled commitments that have run deep and been rooted in my busy life.

There is sadness in letting go of hobbies, social events, and social media, yet I begin to see the space that my soul so desperately desires. Life is not static: it is growing and changing. I remember stepping down as a coordinator of a group I dearly loved or resigning from the safety of a job I had come to rely upon. I also continue to experience the evolving roles and involvement that I have as a mom. When I am willing to embrace the living process and participate in the necessary “thinning” or “weeding out,” I am free to grow, blossom, and flourish