

Territorial WM Website Submissions for the 2024-2025 Program Year
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Cultivating a Spirit of Victory

I Corinthians 15:57 tells us, “But thanks be to God! He gives the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Many years ago I was at a seminar and the person next to me wrote “Me + God = Majority”. I always remembered that message because it was as clear as those “WWJD” bracelets/bumper stickers/t-shirts/etc. that took over my life and any free space I had as a teen. The deep reality is that us alone, we might have small victories but with God, ours is the victory over all because “You + God = Majority!”

During World War I and World War II, everyday citizens, much like you and I were called to join together and help with the war effort in a surprising way. This wasn't taking up arms or marching to the front lines, but what it was; was simple, timeless, and practical. Ordinary citizens began planting what we now call “Victory Gardens”, these gardens would be to aid in the war effort to ensure there was enough food. However, these gardens would prove to be symbols of hope, resilience, and community spirit. So much of what we see in those gardens mirrors our walk with God and our pursuit of victory in and through Christ.

Brief History:

Victory Gardens were also known as war gardens or defense gardens. These gardens were planted by private citizens during both World Wars. People planted these in order to reduce pressure and reliance on commercial or public food supplies. People would grow nearly anything that was edible. The locations became somewhat of a craft in and of themselves. Sometimes gardens would pop up in normal places like backyards, and vacant lots. Other times, a new Victory Garden would appear on the rooftop of a commercial building. At its height Victory Gardens produced as estimated 40% of all the fruits and vegetables consumed in the United States. While the initial intention was to serve a purpose, maintain food security. What happened following would prove to be something just as important and lasting. Victory Gardens would give purpose and empowerment to those not on the front lines, and create a sense of community that would last for generations.

A Victorious Parallel:

There are few times I've ever felt more victorious as when I simply put a seed into the ground, water occasionally, and in 7-10 days a little sprout pops out. For me, there's something almost magical about the emergence of those little sprouts after placing a simple seed into the ground. The time in my garden is a quiet time often spent alone with God because I can see so many parallels to my spiritual life as I do the garden growth.

Isaiah 58:11 says, “The Lord will always lead you, satisfy you in a parched land, and strengthen your bones. You will be like a watered garden and like a spring whose waters never run dry.” This verse was written post exile. The Israelites needed frequent and consistent assurance they had the victory through Christ.

I'm a person who like check lists and instructions. So now we deep dive into the parallels of Victory Gardens while we journey towards leaning into victory in Christ.

Sowing Seeds of Faith:

Just as everyday citizens sowed seeds to grow in their Victory Gardens, we are called to sow seeds in our own lives. Even if we think of literal seeds, it takes a little faith that what you're planting will pop up in time. Even more so, the things we plant into our lives, we pray take root in our lives and the lives of others. Galatians 6:9 encourages us: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." When we plant seeds of kindness, love, and faith we trust God for a fruitful harvest in due time.

Deep dig conversation: Who is someone who has planted a seed of faith in your life? What did they say or do that helped you sow seeds of faith? What was one moment in your life where you felt you were planting a big seed of faith? How is that seed of faith?

Cultivating Resilience:

An unkept garden simply won't thrive for too long. Often the success of gardens is dependent on the gardener who invests time and perseverance. The Victory Gardens were hugely successful because someone (often more than one someone) took the time and investment into them. James 1:12 reminds us that, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him." We can often consider the trials of life as the dirt, the inconvenient thing that a well-meaning kid or puppy tracks in on a spotless floor. However, the reality is that despite life's trials, our willingness to be steadfast in faith ensures that we will find our victory in Christ.

Deep dig conversation: What are some things in your life that you've really tried to cultivate? What are you currently investing your time and perseverance in? Is there a time that you felt you were really trying to persevere? Did your perseverance pay off or what stopped you from continuing?

Community and Support:

The added benefit of the Victory Gardens wasn't just that it produced food, that *was* ultimately the goal. However, it did something bigger than just a carrot, cabbage, or lettuce could offer during an uncertain time, it helped to build communities. "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25 Together our spiritual journey and victory through Christ is strengthened when as community we are supported and encouraged through faith.

Deep dig conversation: Who do you consider your community? Has your community grown organically, or did it happen through planned and scheduled events? Who is someone you think of or call upon when you're not feeling strengthened or connected to your community? What victories have you seen or are able to accomplish when you've been strengthened by your community?

Fruitful abundance harvest

As each Victory Garden produced food, many times in an abundance than the people tending it, it became a symbol of hope and provision, even when things seemed uncertain. The whole world at times seemed at odds with itself, but for brief moments in the hands of the gardeners, there were little victories. John 15:5 reminds us of how to live an abundant and victorious life through Christ. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." Staying connected to Christ ensure that our lives will see miraculous victories through fruitfulness and reflections of His love and grace.

Deep dig conversation: When have you felt you've lived in abundance? When have you felt like you've lived with an abundance of Christ in your life? What gives you hope for the future?

The incredible legacy of Victory Gardens during such unsettling times serves as a poignant reminder of the incredible victory we have in Jesus Christ. We sow seeds of faith, cultivate resilience, foster community, and remain faithful for an abundant harvest we have found victory in Him. Let us rest and share in our victories knowing that through Christ we are more than conquerors.

Beaded Victory Garden Wands:

Playlist for crafting:

See a Victory – Elevation Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIFwCO5-dul>

Every Victory – The Belonging Company

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pC5wGDgUqhl>

Overcome – Jeremy Camp

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eP-JdZs4V54>

Although the primary focus of Victory Gardens was to produce food. They were also a place to showcase deep pride for their community, patriotism, and even help distinguish certain foods growing. Many Victory Gardens were adorned with, art and signs, pathways and borders, scarecrows and garden figures, even flowers.

What you will need:

Threaded rods – ours were sized 8/32 inch., they're also known as M4 screw rods. We purchased ours precut in 9-inch rods. However, for money saving, you can purchase longer versions and cut them to the size you'd prefer.

Bolt cutters/grinder/or hack saw (if you are not purchasing precut rods). If you're comfortable and know your way around some basic tools this should be an easy job to cut to size.

Nut- to be threaded on the rod, since we used an 8/32 (8 being the diameter of the screw and 32 indicates the number of threads per inch) we would at least one nut per rod.

Large Hole Beads – I also saw these referred to as "European Beads", purchase a variety of colors and/or textures. They come in both glass and plastic variety, so whatever your budget is or the

look you're going for, shop around. You can also find fun embellishments as well that can accommodate the rod and provide a beautiful element.

Drawer Pulls – These will be used as the toppers. They can come in a variety of different colors, textures, and materials. You can also repurpose old furniture that's headed to the scrap yard or hit up yard/garage sales.

Tell your victory story - Start with the nut and place it about a quarter to a third of the way down the rod. This will serve as the bottom and keep the beads from falling straight down. Flip your threaded rod around and then tell your victory story in the color of the beads. Perhaps take a moment or two and visualize the victory you've seen with Christ as your side. Maybe it's the birth of a baby you thought you might not ever see, or a defeated medical diagnosis, maybe it's the gift of a beautiful uneventful and simple life with Jesus as your side, maybe you're desperately seeking to see your victory, but it hasn't come just yet. Whatever your victory is tell the story in the colors from darkest moments to bright shining moments to the journey to victory.

When you're finished, top it with a beautiful top of one of the drawer pulls. What does the top symbolize for you?

Now place it in the dirt of a houseplant or a raised garden bed, maybe amongst flowers, or even on a farm. Wherever you place it, know that this place now is your own place to celebrate and recognize the victory for which we have or anticipate having in Christ.