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I was hesitant at first on writing something about plants because they're such a large part of my life but I hardly ever notice them. They provide food and medicine, flowers and shade and homes for animals - they're everywhere, all around us, yet I rarely take time to see them. As I've been thinking about it I've come to realize that plants have made some lasting impressions on my life. Let me share with you three stories of plants in my life.

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This past Christmas, my nephew told me a story about my childhood that he had heard from my brother, and it brought back a long-forgotten memory of a family camping trip in the high deserts of Colorado. As a child (and even now) I had a propensity to stumble as I walked and often wound up on the ground; this excursion was no exception. While hiking from the lake to the campsite I did, in fact, stumble and tumble, but I received the added bonus of a prickly pear cactus firmly affixed to my posterior. While my nephew laughed as he told me about my past, my recollection of the moment and its aftermath was less than humorous.

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In the spring of 2015 my parents began sorting through their life's belongings as they were transitioning from house to travel-trailer so they could begin their now-nomadic lifestyle. Despite many yard sales over the years, they had managed to retain a lot of stuff and had to sort through it all and make decisions. There were some things that could definitely be tossed out, there were family heirlooms that needed to be kept, and there were things with which no one knew what to do.

One of these was a thirty-three year old, seven foot tall ficus plant nicknamed 'The Jungle.' For as long as I could remember, that plant was somewhere in our home, tucked away in a corner and growing ever-so-slightly over the years. I would question my dad about why we kept hauling it from house to house, but I always knew it was a non-negotiable. After the stillbirth of my sister in 1982, my mom received that plant and it had been a staple in our household ever since.

That plant, as difficult as it was to move, was an important part of my family. It didn't fill the gap left by my sister, but provided a gentle and beautiful reminder of her for my parents. For my brother and me, it was a reminder of home and that, though the locations changed, we could find stability and love in our parents' home.

While I enjoy shopping for houseplants and flowers to give as gifts, I have never been on the receiving end until recently. For Valentine's Day I received an embarrassingly large amount of items from Chelsea May, including a small bouquet of Dutch petite roses. It was the first time I had received flowers, and I kept one as a reminder of the beauty of creation, but more so, I kept one as a reminder that someone cares for me, loves me, and wants me to have beauty in my life.

Plants have an enormous place in my life but I rarely see it. I hardly notice the affect plants have on me, their generosity to me, or their sacrifice for me. I pray that God will open my eyes to see the beauty of creation, will grant me gentle hands to hold the gift given to me, and that I may heed the call to honor, use, and care for them wisely.

much love. sheth.