



The JADE

by Lois Hymes (*friend of Rev. Julia Schwert*)

The **JADE** is just another plant, but to me it is a reminder of the tender faithfulness of God.

I want to take this time to share notes from my journal dated July 14, 1992. I was at the conservatory at Hidden Lake Gardens.

It is so quiet, Lord. Yet the wind, the birds, the swans all sing out praise to You alone. The trees so tall and proud, so majestic with the limbs rising up to the heavens shout out in worship. All of Your creation displays Your Glory. Each plant is different, unique, and priceless. Each plant carefully planted by the Master Gardner.

You planted me in the desert, the ARID lands. All these years I have struggled in the desert, only surviving, seldom living. Always afraid of the life You planned for me. Always afraid to Trust. Almost, but never quite letting go of You.

The desert. Life in the desert. Beauty in the desert. Such awe and wonder at the treasurers in the desert. The **JADE**. Strong with hearty leaves and a thick trunk. What a sight to behold.

You said that **JADE** represented my life. So, I reached out to touch the **JADE**. It moved. It was not ridged and firm like a tree. It moved. You planted me in the desert, in the ARID Exhibit so that I would be strong with roots going deep, finding water in the desert. Strong and yet moved with compassion to the cries of others struggling in the desert.

I don't like the desert, Lord, but I love the Gardner and I choose to trust Him.

Fast Forward to September 2006, a young man came to minister as an associate pastor at our church. I felt impressed to share the story of the **JADE**. The experience was very personal for me and difficult to share. I was sure he would declare that I was "crazy," "an absolute quack" or "completely off my rocker." But, in spite of my petty fears,

I took him to see the **JADE**. I knew God had marvelous plans for his life even though at the time he was struggling in the desert. He chose the desert, chose to bloom where the Master had planted. And the **JADE** grew. He trusted the Master. Now, he pastors a church in Tennessee. He is sharing life, hope, and freedom. He is sharing the message of our Master. The **JADE** continues to grow.

Fast Forward to today. All these years all the special meaning of the **JADE** and I never bought a plant for myself. Tonight, a dear friend gave me a **JADE**. A reminder that the **JADE** continues to bloom and grow in this season of retirement. I still don't like the desert, but I love the Gardner.

Footnote to the **JADE** story: On the day I shared my story with the young pastor, he discovered another jade located in the Tropical Dome. Could it be? A jade among the vibrant colors of the tropics? Reds and yellows and blues. Every shade of green imaginable (BTW Green is God's favorite color). My heart began to race. Maybe God was transplanting me to the Tropics. I rushed to find the jade. Yes, there was the jade plant. The jade, in the tropics, surrounded by vines and flowers of every size and shade. It was a small jade. Very small. Not like the large majestic jade in the desert. The jade was growing beside a plant called the "Crown of Thorns." I had to stifle a laugh. Somehow the desert didn't seem so bad. **#trusttheMastergardner**

Editor's Notes: *We look at others and think "they've got it together" when at the same time those thoughts are going through the other person's mind as they look at us. Not a wonder that God said He and He alone will judge. He and He alone truly knows the heart and deepest thoughts and feelings of each of us. The question is not 'does God have a plan for my life?' The question is 'will I trust God to work His plan in my life and submit my will to Him?'*