

Landscape War

It's not just a physical battle

I tell people we are grass farmers since we live on several acres of land that is mostly grass. As caretakers of the land God has given us, we wanted to improve our backyard with a landscape plan that included planting beds which did not allow grass and weeds in them. But, like a Christian in a fallen world full of spiritual “weeds,” we found creating a weed-free landscape would not be a one-time task of planting and then enjoying the result. Keeping the plantings healthy and free of weeds requires constant attention and action during the growing season, pulling out the invaders before they take over the beds. Our landscape plans placed us in an ongoing war against determined and opportunistic foes.

We removed the old deck and spent most of one spring and summer building a new, larger deck. In the spring, the patio was expanded using paving stones set on a sand and rock base. Next, planting beds were constructed using large rocks as visual anchors. The soil was covered with landscape fabric and mulch before the plants we chose were installed. With bed edges trimmed and everything in place, we could finally sit back and enjoy our new backyard space and landscaping. Or so we thought.

Soon, small plants eagerly began to grow in the sand lines between patio pavers. Grass and broadleaf weeds appeared in the mulch, putting down anchoring roots and punching holes in the landscape fabric. Other plants

bearing sharp thorns claimed the spaces between retaining-wall blocks and walkway stones as their own. All had to be pulled out by hand to keep the design pure. Also, in the patio drainage pond, cattails grew. At first, I thought they added a “natural” element to the small pond. However, their intent was not to complement but to conquer. Cattails are invasive, and, left to themselves, they nearly filled the shallow pond with their growth. With roots almost impossible to pull out, the cattails had to be cut off below the water level time and again until the roots finally died. That battle was won, but the war continues.

Actually, it is only a war from my perspective. It is a war of my will and plans

against the God-given drive of living things to survive and spread wherever they can. God has intentionally designed life to multiply and aggressively fill the Earth even if I have other plans for the same space. This is ultimately for my benefit. But my backyard landscape war is a vivid reminder to me that I am not really in charge; nature may bend, but does not bow, to my will. It also reminds me that there is a larger war against another living foe whose spiritual “weeds” seek to take root in my life. Against this foe, I need the strength and power of the God of the Garden because He has already won the war against the weeds of sin and death.

– Michael G. Windheuser, Ph.D.



*If we hope to become
"like a watered garden"
(Isa. 58:11),
the One mistaken
for the gardener
on Resurrection Day
will need to do
His special work
in our lives.*