



Sweet Peas Sweet Grief

There is still time to plant *sweet peas*.

Sweet peas are botanically named *lathyrus odoratus*. The word *odoratus* immediately gives a clue to the secret of a traditional sweet pea - it's intense unique fragrance which evokes memories of an old fashioned rambling cottage garden.

Part of the *legume* family, sweet peas are native to the Eastern Mediterranean. A Victorian gent., Henry Eckford, a Scottish nurseryman cross-bred and developed the sweet pea in the 1880s. The town of Wem in Shropshire England is the "home" of the *sweet pea* and has street signs with sweet pea symbols plus an annual Sweet Pea Show. Imagine the perfume?

As well as the fragrance sweet pea flowers look like fragile fringed butterflies as they catch the breeze, inviting bees and other pollinators. The plant is an annual climber. The flowers are determined and strong and will seek the light, pushing through other plants.

Even although strong the plants can be easily snapped and broken as a well meaning gardener tries to help it on it's way up the trellis

As they grow, tendrils look for a structure or support to cling to. These wiry tendrils twine around and cling on tight to support the flower stalks as they bloom.

After flowering, a seed pod forms, dries and bursts, releasing seeds for the next year. They are great self-sowers.

Unlike edible peas, the sweet pea pod is toxic if eaten, but there is something in the peas that is used in medical skin grafting to avoid skin disfiguration.

Seeds benefit from chipping with a sharp blade before planting and it is helpful to soak them overnight.

As the wee plants grow they benefit from pinching out new shoots to promote a higher flower yield.

They can suffer from aphids which will suck the sap from the plant weakening it and reducing growth.

I guess you can see where I am going....

As bereaved parents we can identify with a sweet pea.

Those seeds need to be chipped at with a sharp pain before growing.

Soaking overnight - how many of us have soaked our pillows with our tears.

Then more pain as the new shoots are pinched out to promote healthy growth and blooming.

Our grief can suck the very sap from our core and heart reducing our growth and strength as we face a future with a huge hole in it.

These painful experiences can be turned to a good strength on our grief journey.

We can be strong and determined as we push though the depths of sadness looking for light. We are easily broken and hurt and misunderstood by well meaning folk.

Let us be encouraged that the pain and brokenness will help us to grow strong and bloom and have a fragrance about us as we live through our grief.

Then as we come to another anniversary of the death of our child we can be super self sowers as we face another year.