

## **Homeschooling Field Trip: A Matter of Good Stewardship**

by Robin Livingston

Recently, my children and I attended a field trip with a local homeschoolers' group. We went to a local farm for a picnic lunch and a tour of the farm. To say that this farm is exquisite would be an understatement! The grass was lush and dark green. It was so thick, it was like walking on carpet. The horses were perfectly groomed and healthy-looking. The grounds were immaculate. Near the gardens were a small greenhouse and a charming little herb shop.

The entrance to the herb garden was a large archway, covered in wisteria, which was in full bloom. The herb garden, which took up maybe 1/4 acre, was designed in a manner similar to the formal gardens of Europe, but it had a very relaxed feeling about it. The lady who owned it would walk up to the plants and break off some pieces for the children to smell. The children were allowed to pick almost any flower in the garden. Each section of the herb garden had a theme. She had a healing herb garden, an "herbs of the Bible" garden, a tea garden, and a kitchen garden, plus several others whose signs I didn't read. Within each themed garden, she placed little decorations that reinforced the theme—an old teapot in the tea garden, dishes in the kitchen garden, and little stones with scriptures carved into them for the "herbs of the Bible" garden. Along the walkways, various benches, some antique and some modern, were strategically placed to be inconspicuous, yet inviting. I could see myself enjoying some serious meditation and contemplation in a place like that.

On the property was a large pond, perfectly blue-green and crystal clear. A large arched stone bridge crossed over the water to a playground. The pond itself had large goldfish and blooming water lilies. Near the bridge and playground, there was a large stone deck with lawn furniture and a fire pit. The house was off to the side of the property. The landscaping around the house was simple but elegant. Everything was perfectly managed and yet casually comfortable. Beatrix Potter could not have drawn this farm any more charming than it was.

The children's tour was guided by the proprietor. She started by reading the creation story from the book of Genesis. She talked all about God's creation, and she told them our tour was to be a treasure hunt to find the treasures God created. The children were able to bring home samples of various herbs and plants, which represented Day 3 of creation. They also brought home an oyster shell, which the proprietor uses in some of her gardens. The shell represented Day 5, when God created the fish and the birds. We got to see more farm animals—goats, cows and sheep—which represented Day 6. As the tour came to a close, she gave each child some organic candy. The children were allowed to swing on a large porch swing just outside the store to rest before going home.

The shop is a converted horse barn. Inside are antiques of various kinds, mostly old Victorian garden decorations and signs. The owner also sells herb seeds and plants. Her herb plants were perfect. No flaw in any pot. She also sold various gift items such as soaps, candles, candies, and knick-knacks. She had some old furniture and antique toys for sale as well.

The proprietor is an attractive blond woman in her mid-50's. She has such a bright and charming personality. It was clear to us that she loves God, she loves her property, and she loves people. She really seemed to enjoy touring with our children. The most fun was seeing how enthusiastic the children were at each new discovery. We had a group of probably 12 children, and they were all completely enthralled with the farm and the owner. As we admired and complimented the proprietor on her property, she said she thanked God for it every day. She felt so blessed by her ownership of this land that she wanted to share it with anyone who would enjoy it.

What a powerful lesson in good stewardship.