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Don't Be Bamboozled



Want to deepen your spirituality? Learn from the world's fastest growing plant .

Though valued in the west for its strength and versatility, bamboo is a fixture of Asian art, music and literature. In the creation stories of several eastern countries, the first man and woman emerge from a split bamboo stem. The plant is a symbol of friendship and longevity and, along with the pine tree and plum blossom, bamboo is admired for its perseverance under harsh conditions.

A member of the grass family, the hardy plant is found everywhere except Europe and Antarctica. No wonder. It's harder than maple or oak, as strong as concrete when compressed, and able to withstand more force without breaking than even steel.

But the most famous characteristic of bamboo is its rapid growth. Its hollow stems, or culms, can shoot up 5 cm (2 in.) an hour, or 100 cm (39 in.) in a single day, depending on soil and climate. Unlike trees, all bamboo has the potential to grow to full height and girth in just one season. The biggest bamboo pole ever was 45 metres tall (150 ft.), weighed 450 kg (990 lbs) and had a circumference of 35 cm (14 in.).

According to historians, ancient farmers in China used the material to build waterwheels, troughs and pipes that carried river water onto rice fields. They built their homes out of bamboo, used it to corral their animals, ate bamboo shoots off bamboo plates with bamboo chopsticks, and finished off with bamboo cups of ulanzi, — fermented wine made from bamboo sap.

Over the ages, bamboo was also used to make clothing (it doesn't hold odours like other fabrics), medicine to treat infection and promote healing, and construction materials — everything from ladders and



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bow the head
unless first we
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scaffolding to entire houses resistant to earthquakes and cyclones. And that's not counting the Gilligan's Island geiger counter made by the Professor!

Thanks to bamboo's dense, fibrous root system, it can grow almost anywhere, retaining moisture, preventing erosion and rebuilding the soil. Not only do its leaves feed pandas, lemurs and gorillas, they absorb carbon dioxide better than trees and generate 30 per cent more oxygen. This quickly renewable, eco-friendly plant is poised to become one of this century's most valuable commodities.

If many ways, bamboo is a metaphor for love, the basis of all spiritual growth. Man and woman emerged from the love of God and, even today, love is a symbol of friendship and perseverance amid even the harshest conditions. In its purest form, love is both invincible and of great value. *"Place me like a seal over your heart,"* writes Solomon to his beloved. *"For love is as strong as death... Love flashes like fire, the brightest kind of flame. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can rivers drown it. If a man tried to buy love with all his wealth, his offer would be utterly scorned (Song of Solomon 8:6,7)*

Since love grows fastest when we plant ourselves in the best spiritual soil, in a positive, spiritual climate, it's vital to surround ourselves with a loving, accepting church family that will value our individuality and giftedness but hold us accountable. Each one of us has the potential to reach our full spiritual potential and, in the right climate, our love can be used in a multitude of ways to glorify God and serve others.

Love must be the very fabric of our lives. *"Above all, clothe yourselves with love which binds us together in perfect harmony,"* Paul says (Col. 3:14). When we do, we counter the infection of sin and self-centredness and promote healing and in each of our relationships. Such love allows us to build homes, churches and lives that can withstand any storm with strength and flexibility.

As with bamboo, the source of that strength lies far below the surface once you commit to spirituality. *"Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong,"* says Paul. *"May you experience the love of Christ... Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God."* (Eph. 3: 17,19). Love will anchor your life, rebuild the spiritual soil so others can thrive, and improve the environment around you. Get growing. *Rick Gamble*