



ESL Podcast 637 – Planting Flowers and Trees

GLOSSARY

to plant – to put seeds or plants into the ground so that they can grow, usually to produce food or to make an area more beautiful

* Thirty years ago, we planted a small maple tree in front of our home, and now it's beautiful and at least 20 feet tall.

garden – an area of land used for growing plants, either for food or for beauty

* Reynosa picked lettuce, tomatoes, and cucumbers from her garden to make a salad.

fertilizer – a substance that makes soil (earth; dirt) better and more nutritious for plants, often made from animal feces (solid waste) or chemicals like nitrogen and phosphorous

* Our plants would grow more quickly and be healthier if we put some fertilizer in the soil.

to get to (someone) – to bother or annoy someone, especially after a period of time

* All the news stories about homeless people are starting to get to me. I think we should volunteer and do something to help.

weed – an unwanted plant; an undesirable plant that should be removed from an area

* Our rose garden has so many weeds that we almost can't see the flowers!

soil – dirt; earth; the substance on the ground outdoors that plants can grow in

* Do we need to buy special soil for these flowers, or can we just plant them in front of the house?

to dig – to make a hole in the earth, usually by using a shovel (a tool) to move soil

* The dog dug a hole near the tree and buried its bone there.

hole – an open area with nothing in it, surrounded by something else

* Watch where you step! There are a lot of holes in the sidewalk and you could hurt yourself if you fell into one.

seed – the small piece of a plant that has all the genetic information needed for a new plant to grow

* The little girl's mother taught her not to eat the seeds when she eats an apple. She should spit them out.



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flower – a beautiful, colorful part of a plant, usually with many small pieces, that a plant uses to attract insects like bees, and that people give to each other as gifts

* Melissa had beautiful flowers at her wedding ceremony: hydrangea, roses, and tulips.

pot – a plastic or ceramic container, usually round, without a top that is filled with soil and plants, used either indoors or outdoors

* Winnie grows mint, oregano, basil, and other herbs in small pots by her kitchen window.

left – remaining; still available

* A lot of food was left after the party, so Camden asked his guests to take some of it home with them.

deep – with a long distance below the surface; going far below something

* If you don't know how to swim very well, stay out of the deep end of the pool.

root – one of the parts of a plant that is below ground and not seen, used to bring water and nutrients out of the soil and into the plant

* If we want to get rid of those blackberry plants, we need to make sure we pull out all the roots. Otherwise they'll just grow back again.

to grow – for a living thing to become bigger and older over time

* I can't believe how much your children have grown since the last time I saw them!

direct sunlight – with sunshine falling on something; with exposure to the sun that is not blocked by anything else

* Those plants will probably die in direct sunshine. It would be better to plant them in the shade under a tree.

to water – to put a small amount of water on or near a plant so that it will continue to live and grow

* How often do you water your houseplants?

to supervise – to manage; to watch how someone is doing something and give recommendations, instructions, and orders for doing it better

* Nathan spends a lot of time supervising his new employees, but once they prove that they know what they're doing, he lets them work independently.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these should be planted in the ground?
 - a) Hole.
 - b) Flowers.
 - c) Pots.

2. What does Eric say about fertilizer?
 - a) He's starting to like the smell of fertilizer.
 - b) He doesn't notice the smell of fertilizer anymore.
 - c) The smell of fertilizer is starting to bother him.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to dig

The verb “to dig,” in this podcast, means to make a hole in the earth, usually by using a shovel (a tool) to move soil: “Before you dig a hole in your yard, call the gas company to make sure you don’t break one of their pipes.” The phrase “to dig a hole for (oneself)” means to do something that creates problems for oneself: “By using his credit card to buy everything, Cleve is really just digging a hole for himself.” The phrase “to dig (one’s) own grave” has the same meaning: “I can’t believe Clifton spoke to his boss so rudely! He’s digging his own grave.” Finally, the phrase “to dig (one’s) heels in” means to refuse to do what other people want one to do: “Everyone tried to convince Savannah not to buy the house, but she dug her heels in and did it anyway.”

left

In this podcast, the word “left” means remaining or still available: “We’ve dusted, vacuumed, and swept, so all that’s left is to vacuum and then our house will be perfectly clean.” Or, “I only have \$4 left, but that should be enough for us to go get some ice cream.” The phrase “to leave (someone)” means to stop living with one’s spouse and/or children: “Her Dad left them when she was just four years old.” The phrase “to leave (something) to (someone)” means to make arrangements for someone to have something one owns after one dies: “Grandma left all her jewelry to Aunt Lena.” Finally, the phrase “to leave a lot to be desired” describes something that is not very good: “Normally the restaurant serves delicious food, but last night, our meal left a lot to be desired.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Many Americans like to have a flower garden in front of their house to make it more beautiful. The gardener tries to plant a lot of colorful plants that “flower” (bloom; produce flowers) at different times of the year. If the plants are chosen because they’ll “attract” (make something want to come) “butterflies” (flying insects with large, colorful wings), the garden is known as a “butterfly garden.” If the garden is in a “shady” (in a shadow; without much sunlight) area, it is known as a “shade garden” and has only plants that grow well in the shade.

A “vegetable garden” is typically grown behind a house, where people don’t see it. Vegetable gardens aren’t “intended” (meant; supposed) to be beautiful. Instead, they are intended to be used for growing food. A typical vegetable garden produces enough tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, carrots, and other vegetables for one family to eat during the summer. An “herb garden” is a small garden that has also has “edible” (able to be eaten) plants, but only “herbs,” which are small plants with strong flavor, like oregano, basil, and mint.

A “community garden” is shared space where many people grow plants, especially when they don’t have enough land to grow a garden in their own home or apartment.

Some people don’t want to spend a lot of time working in a garden, so they might have a “rock garden,” where rocks are placed “artistically” (in nice-looking ways) for “visual interest” (something that people like to look at). If there are enough rocks, weeds can’t grow there.

City parks sometimes have “sculpture gardens” where there are many “sculptures,” or large pieces of art made from wood, plaster, or metal. The focus is on the artwork – not on plants – so the sculptures often just rest on grass.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – b; 2 – c



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 637: Planting Flowers and Trees.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 637. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Download a Learning Guide for this episode that will help you improve your English – and make the sun shine brighter in the morning! It's true!

This episode is a dialogue between Zuly and Eric about flowers and trees. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Zuly: Hurry up! Mom will be home any minute and we're not done planting.

Eric: Whose idea was it anyway to plant a garden for Mom for her birthday? We've been working under this hot sun all day and the smell of the fertilizer is really getting to me.

Zuly: It was our idea, remember? We both wanted to give Mom something special this year. Look, we're almost done. We've already picked the weeds, prepared the soil, and dug the holes for the new seeds and flowers. I'm taking the flowers out of their pots now and I'll have them in the ground in a minute. After that, all we have left to do is to plant the new tree. Keep digging!

Eric: Are you sure the hole needs to be this deep?

Zuly: Yes, the book says that the roots need to have room to grow. That's the perfect place for it, too. It'll get a lot of direct sunlight.

Eric: Great, but my arms are so tired, they're about to fall off.

Zuly: Move over. I'll dig for a while. Why don't you water the new flowers?

Eric: Sure, right after I take a little break. In the meantime, I'll supervise. Come on. Keep digging. You're almost there...



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Zuly: I think you'd better keep your mouth shut, or I'll think of some new uses for that fertilizer!

[end of dialogue]

Zuly and Eric are brother and sister. Zuly says to Eric, "Hurry up (go faster)! Mom will be home any minute (meaning very soon) and we're not done planting." "To plant," as a verb, means to put seeds or plants into the ground so that they can grow, either to produce a flower or some kind of food typically. A "seed" is a very small part of a tree or plant that when you put it in the ground grows another tree or plant. It's how – one way how trees and plants reproduce, how you get more of them. The verb, then, is "to plant" seeds, flowers, or trees – to put them in the ground.

Eric says, "Whose idea was it anyway to plant a garden for Mom for her birthday?" A "garden" is an area often near your house where you grow plants, either flowers or food. Many people grow certain kinds of food in gardens. When I was young we had a small garden where we had tomatoes and carrots and, I think, green onions. I was never a very good gardener. A "gardener" is someone who works in a garden. A "gardener," more commonly pronounced "*gardner*," is also someone who you bring to your house to cut your grass and trees and so forth.

So, Zuly and Eric are planting a garden – that's what we would say, "to plant a garden" – for their mother. He says, "We've been working under this hot sun all day and the smell of the fertilizer is really getting to me." "Fertilizer" (fertilizer) is often made from the waste of animals – if you understand what I mean. When the animal goes to the bathroom, you take what comes out of the animal, and you put it in your garden, because it will help the ground – the soil we would call it; the dirt – it will help it give nutrients – give food to the plants that will then help the plant grow. At least that's what I think happens – I'm not a gardener! "To get to (someone)" means to bother someone, especially after a long period of time. "My new colleague (my new co-worker) is really getting to me." He's bothering me.

Well, Eric says that the smell of the fertilizer is getting to him. Fertilizer doesn't smell very nice! Zuly responds, "It was our idea (both of us), remember? We both wanted to give Mom something special this year. Look, we're almost done (we're almost finished; we have almost completed the garden). We've already picked the weeds, prepared the soil, and dug the holes for the new seeds and flowers." Couple of words there: "We picked the weeds." A "weed" (weed) is a plant that you don't want, that you didn't put in your garden but is growing there



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anyway. That's a weed. "Weed" informally – slang – also can mean marijuana, the drug that some people smoke. In fact, there is a television show – I think it's still running – it's still being shown, called Weeds, about a family that grows marijuana. Strange but true! Well here, Zuly and Eric are trying to get rid of the weeds, that's why Zuly says they have "picked them," meaning they have taken them out of the ground. They've also prepared the soil. "Soil," as I mentioned earlier, is another name for dirt or earth; it's what you put the seeds into when you are planting them. "To dig" (dig) means to make a hole in the earth to usually put something in there. The past tense of "dig" is "dug" (dug). "Dig" has other meanings, which you can find in our Learning Guide. "Seeds," we've already mentioned also, are a small part of the plant that has all of the necessary genetic information to reproduce, or to make a new plant or a new tree. A "hole," you probably know, is an area with nothing in it surrounded by something else. You can have a hole in the wall; you have the wall, but then you have a circle, let's say, that has nothing in it – there's no wall. That's a hole.

So Zuly says that we've already picked the weeds, prepared the soil, and dug the holes for the new seeds and flowers. "I'm taking the flowers out of their pots now and I'll have them in the ground in a minute." A "pot" (pot) is usually a round, small container, like a small bucket, that you put soil into – dirt into, and you can grow a plant in this little pot, and you can move the pot from one part of the house to another. In this case, Zuly is planting flowers that are in small pots. She will take them out of the pots and put them in the ground in the garden so they can grow bigger. After putting the flowers in the ground, she says that all we have left to do is to plant the new tree. The word "left" here is not the opposite of "right"; "left" here means remaining or still available. For example, if you have five cookies and you eat two of the cookies, I can ask you, "How many cookies do you have left?" How many are remaining? And the answer, of course, is one, because I ate two of them when you were not looking. You have to be careful with me!

So, Zuly is saying they're almost finished, and tells Eric to keep "digging," keep taking dirt out of the ground, making holes, so they can plant the flowers. Eric says, "Are you sure the hole needs to be this deep?" "To be deep" means to be below the surface, going far below something. If you die and they bury your body, they will dig a deep grave. A "grave" is a place where you put a dead body. The grave has to be deep – it has to be a hole that goes down far into the earth.

Eric is asking Zuly if the hole has to be very deep – "this deep?" Zuly says, "Yes, the book says that the roots need to have room to grow." The "roots" (roots) of a plant or tree are the parts of the plant or tree that are below the ground that you



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can't see. "To grow" is when a living thing becomes bigger, older. Zuly says they need these big holes – these deep holes so that the roots have room to grow, they have a place where they can grow. Zuly says, "That's the perfect place for it, too. It'll get lots of direct sunlight." "Sunlight" is light from the sun, obviously. "Direct sunlight" is when the sunlight goes right on it, there's nothing in between it, it's not blocked by anything else.

Eric says, "Great, but my arms are so tired, they're about to fall off." "To fall off" means they are about to come off of his body, to leave or become disconnected from his body. Of course, Eric is joking; it's just a way of expressing how tired he is.

Zuly says, "Move over. I'll dig for a while. Why don't you water the new flowers?" "To water," as a verb, means to put water usually on a plant or a tree or grass to help it grow. Eric says, "Sure, right after I take a little break." I'm going to stop working right now, he says. "In the meantime (meaning while I am doing that), I'll supervise." "To supervise" (supervise) means to manage, to watch how someone is doing something, to give them instructions. It's what a boss does. In fact, a person who supervises is often called a supervisor, ending in "or". Eric says, "Come on. Keep digging. You're almost there." He's saying this to Zuly. Zuly says, "I think you'd better keep your mouth shut ("to keep your mouth shut" means to stop talking) or I'll think of some new uses for that fertilizer!" She's basically saying to Eric if you don't be quiet I may take this smelly, unpleasant fertilizer and, perhaps, throw it at you. That's the way brother and sisters often act, of course. I know that very well!

Now let's listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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Zuly: I think you'd better keep your mouth shut, or I'll think of some new uses for that fertilizer!

[end of dialogue]

If you want your English to grow like a beautiful flower, don't put fertilizer on it. Instead, listen to the scripts by our own Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. I have no idea what I just said or what it means! Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again on ESL Podcast.

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