



Plants for Reflection: Castor Oil Plant

The **Castor Oil** or **Castor Bean** plant is a flowering plant of the Spurge family. The seeds are the source of Castor Oil widely used for medicinal purposes. The oil can also be used as a lubricant in cars and was used in World War I planes

Bible Passage: Jonah 4:6 (NRSV*)

The Lord God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head to save him from his discomfort.

Jonah's attempt to run away from God is a well-known Bible story, especially the bit where he is swallowed by a whale. The whale delivered him to Nineveh where God wanted him to speak to the citizens about their behaviour.

When God forgives the people of Nineveh, Jonah is upset with God again and goes to sit and sulk in the desert outside the city. God teaches Jonah one final lesson about his love and care. The Hebrew word used for the plant is *qiqayon* which is the castor oil plant. God causes one of these to spring up and provide Jonah with shelter. The next day the scorching wind and heat withers the plant. Jonah is angry again, but God uses it to remind him again about his love and care for the people of Nineveh.

Reflection: God's care

The book of Jonah is a very human story, with lots of sympathetic but imperfect characters. In their very different ways both Jonah and the people of Nineveh are disobedient to God's teaching. Despite these imperfections, the central theme of the story is God's love and care for them.

In the story of Jonah, God expresses his love and care despite the behaviour of Jonah and the citizens of Nineveh. Jonah complains (4:2) "I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing."

The idea of God's unconditional care for us is also theme of Jesus's teaching in the Gospels. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus teaches about how we can trust in God to support us in our needs.

As Christians, we seek to follow Jesus's example. The Bible teaches us that God gave us two fundamental commandments: to love God and to love our neighbour. We can help to show God's care for all people by providing help and care to our neighbours, both in this country and throughout the world. This Bible Garden is offered by the church as a place where people can come and find peace and quiet to reflect on their lives and their needs.

Prayer

Jesus Christ, our living Lord,
We believe that you have promised to love and care for us
Whatever troubles face us
We trust you to hear our cries and care for us

Even in the smallest things matter, we will seek to follow your example,
Taking your commandment to love our neighbour as our measure, and our truth.
In our service we will express our joy and pleasure,
Singing as we come bringing your gifts of love and care day by day.

Lord, in everything we do today
We ask your help that our lives may prepare your way.
May your love, peace and care befriend us
As we walk in your footsteps.

Amen.