

# First Place, Adult Category

## Benjamin's Garden

Spring rolled in softly,  
resting warmth on our cheeks,  
and creating space for little hearts  
to grow into tomorrow.

So when spring offered my son soft soil—  
he answered with a seed.  
He watered it with compassion  
and befriended the earth beneath him.

Spring's gentle breath  
carried the days forward,  
and my son still watched  
his companion grow.

It grew,  
and grew,  
and grew—

In his awe, golden petals unfolded,  
blossoming to finally meet his gaze.  
As if Mirroring his own becoming,  
and tending him in return.

The life I nurtured,  
whose hands I once held—  
now reach out,  
nurturing life beyond me.

- **Jade Erickson**

# Second Place, Adult Category

## Troublesome Toads

I heard a pounce  
in the dewy grass—another toad  
that had been snuggled up  
beside the squash seedlings  
caringly transplanted  
and watered at dusk.

I had to keep an eye on them,  
for those toads could be trouble,  
inadvertently uprooting plantings  
when they hunker down  
into worked, wet soil they so love.

They didn't know those tender squash seedlings,  
properly nurtured, allowed to grow,  
would provide cooling shade they'd seek  
when summer blazes its hottest.

- **Christel Maass**

# Third Place, Adult Category

## Springtime Reed

As it warms, life returns, his wonder grows  
He sees young grass reaching towards the sun's rays  
Reeds dancing with the wind – look as it flows

Staring at tiny white flowers, time slows  
Spider inches across the muddy clay  
See it! A squiggly worm, she burrows

Robins at the feeder, there's two swallows  
Chirp, tweet, caw, squawk – they have so much to say  
Dropping seeds to the ground, a squirrel shows

Mama! Mama! There the ladybug goes  
A short trail of ants, one leading the way  
Bumblebees leaping between the meadows

A bunny looks up and wrinkles its nose  
In the marsh, frogs croak as loud as they may  
Buds pop open, leaves now casting shadows

Just as humid storms give way to rainbows  
And the snow recedes to a brighter day  
I look to him with hope, new tomorrows  
As it warms, life returns, his wonder grows

- **Meg Diedrick**