**GRow Meditation**

**I-** Please take a seat, feel comfortable on your mat or towel. Breathe. Place your hand palms facing upwards on your knees. Close your eyes and take a deep breath, inhale, exhale. Again. We will tell you the story of a seed. For millions of years, flowering plants evolved, diversifying and developing sophisticated mechanisms for growth and reproduction. Humans first appeared on earth much later, a couple hundred thousand years ago. For our entire tenure on this planet, we have been surrounded by flowers, by the pollinators that evolved to tend the flowers, and by the subsequent fruits and seeds that those flowers produced.

**E-** Cultivation has at its root the simple word *cult*—from the Latin *cultus*, to care for. For thousands of years—at least 12,000, but perhaps many more—humans have engaged in plant domestication, developing and caring for progenitors of the crops familiar to us today. (The date of agriculture’s genesis is highly contested. Some archaeologists believe that agriculture was happening 23,000 years ago, even in North America. However, in his book *Africa: A Biography of a Continent*, journalist John Reader estimates that the manipulation of food crops could have begun 70,000 years ago.

**I-** In 2005, an archeologist in Israel had a simple but stunning idea: why not try to germinate the two-thousand-year-old date palm seeds that had been sitting in storage? While old seeds from archeological excavations had been sprouted before, nothing this old had ever been resurrected. But date palms produce what botanists call orthodox seeds, which means that they remain viable long after they have thoroughly dried. (The opposite of an orthodox seed is a recalcitrant seed, which can only be sprouted while fresh and damp. Avocados, for instance, produce recalcitrant seeds.)

**E-** The seed had been found at that site and stored carefully away until the day archeologists decided to sprout it. If plants could act surprised, this one certainly would have been startled to awaken after two-thousand-year slumber, in a modern greenhouse, housed in a plastic pot and fed by drip irrigation. This particular variety of palm, called a Judean date palm, went extinct around 500 AD, making it even more astonishing that the plant was resurrected from the dead. Caretakers are still waiting to find out if they have sprouted a boy or a girl; they hope for a girl so they can sample a long-varnished fruit.

**I -** Over millennia, as humans became dependent on food that we domesticated, the food became dependent on us, a symbiosis of epic proportions. Humans coevolved with food plants like corn and now it cannot exist without us. Human intervention has removed maize’s ability to self-perpetuate and it is no longer a “natural” plant. It needs humans. Without humans to care for the maize, the species would soon die out.

**E-** Within this context of seeds and culture, we would like to emphasize caring for: caring as a human state, caring as a moral imperative or ideal, caring as an affection, caring as an interpersonal relationship, and caring as a nursing intervention. To care is to think and exercise what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something. Let's care and grow!

**This text is a combination of the text A Brief History of Seeds and Plant Domestication by Janisse Ray and Dates, from the book The Drunken Botanist by Amy Stewart.**