Y garden is like a wayward son. The very troubles I have had in bringing it up have made me fonder of it than of greater success more easily won. At least I like to think so, though there are times—“First have your soil in fine, rich condition.” That is the proper way for a treatise on gardening to begin.

Then follow the interesting details of planting. It sounds quite simple. But just suppose your soil refuses to get into fine, rich condition; what then? Perhaps the best way is to go out and buy several loads of good top soil before you plant a seed, but that isn’t the way I did. I have been raising flowers and vegetables with considerable satisfaction for three years, and the soil isn’t in fine, rich condition yet.

When we first came into possession of our backyard, the rear portion of it was grown up to weeds and brambles. I saw not the slightest chance of making it a part of the lawn.

“The only thing we can do with it,” said I, in my ignorance, “is to spade it up and make it into a vegetable garden.”

That is what we did. In fact, most of the waste places of the yard have been used for flowers or vegetables because they wouldn’t support grass; which is unorthodox and foolhardy, but I cannot say that I regret the net result.

In the early spring I went out and thrust a fork into the ground tentatively in two or three places. Then I sallied forth and engaged Mr. Jones, a dusky pillar of the A. M. E. church, to do the spading. He did half of it, and then sent his son Leander over to finish the job. They were underpaid, I’m sure.

It developed that the foundations of my garden were prosaic coal ashes—some gravel and a little soil, but mostly coal ashes. It dawned upon me then that former tenants had utilized this portion of the yard for their ash heap, and it must have been a prodigiously extensive one, both in area and in depth. On nearly the whole of the plot there are ashes and cinders, and though I have spaded deeper each year, I still bring to light odd mementos of a past generation in the form of straps, buckles, rusty hinges, shoes, broken china, and the like.

My faith then was greater than my garden wisdom, and I turned under a load of manure and planted seeds. The result was not a prize garden but, all things considered, it was extraordinary. Like a phoenix from the ashes sprang a garden of corn and peas and beans, and we ate thereof and were glad.