

# The Garden Shrink

## **Cognitive Distortions:** Seeing the Garden (and Life) More Clearly

Cognitive distortions are predictable ways our minds bend reality—especially when we're discouraged, tired, or disappointed. They quietly shape how we interpret both life and the garden. The goal is not to judge these thoughts, but to notice them and gently replace them with something more grounded and growth-friendly.

### **All-or-Nothing Thinking**

*What it looks like:* Seeing things in extremes, with no middle ground.

*Garden thought:* "I never grow good tomatoes. Every season is a failure."

*Garden-wise reframe:* Some seasons work better than others. Progress lives in the middle.

### **Overgeneralization**

*What it looks like:* Drawing broad conclusions from a single setback.

*Garden thought:* "My peppers struggled this year. I'm terrible at gardening."

*Garden-wise reframe:* One crop and one season offer information—not a verdict.

### **Mental Filtering**

*What it looks like:* Focusing only on what went wrong and filtering out what went right.

*Garden thought:* "The squash failed, so the whole garden was a disappointment."

*Garden-wise reframe:* One struggling bed doesn't cancel everything that grew well.

### **Discounting the Positive**

*What it looks like:* Minimizing or dismissing successes so they don't count.

*Garden thought:* "The herbs did well, but that was just luck."

*Garden-wise reframe:* Healthy growth usually reflects care, timing, and attention.

### **Mind Reading**

*What it looks like:* Assuming you know what others think without real evidence.

*Garden thought:* "My neighbors must think my garden looks messy."

*Garden-wise reframe:* Most people aren't judging—and gardens aren't performances.

### **Catastrophizing**

*What it looks like:* Expecting the worst-case scenario and treating it as inevitable.

*Garden thought:* "These leaf spots mean the entire garden is going to die."

*Garden-wise reframe:* Most garden problems are manageable and temporary.

### **Emotional Reasoning**

*What it looks like:* Believing something is true because it feels true.

*Garden thought:* "I feel discouraged, so this season must be a failure."

*Garden-wise reframe:* Feelings reflect experience, not objective facts.

### **"Should" Statements**

*What it looks like:* Using rigid rules that create guilt, pressure, or shame.

*Garden thought:* "I should be better at this by now."

*Garden-wise reframe:* Growth follows rhythms, not deadlines.

### **Labeling**

*What it looks like:* Turning mistakes into fixed, global identities.

*Garden thought:* "I'm just a bad gardener."

*Garden-wise reframe:* You're a learning gardener—like everyone who grows anything.

### **Personalization**

*What it looks like:* Taking responsibility for things outside your control.

*Garden thought:* "The harvest failed—it's my fault."

*Garden-wise reframe:* Weather, soil, pests, and timing all play a role.

Reminder: Good gardeners don't demand perfection. They observe, adjust, and stay in relationship with the process. Growth—human or botanical—happens over time.

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