



BY BETH A. WRIGHT

I had always wanted a garden, but with no yard I didn't think it would be possible.

My first real taste of gardening came at a young age, as I helped my grandparents with their gardens. I loved roaming outside and enjoyed what we planted. I knew that someday I would want a garden of my own.

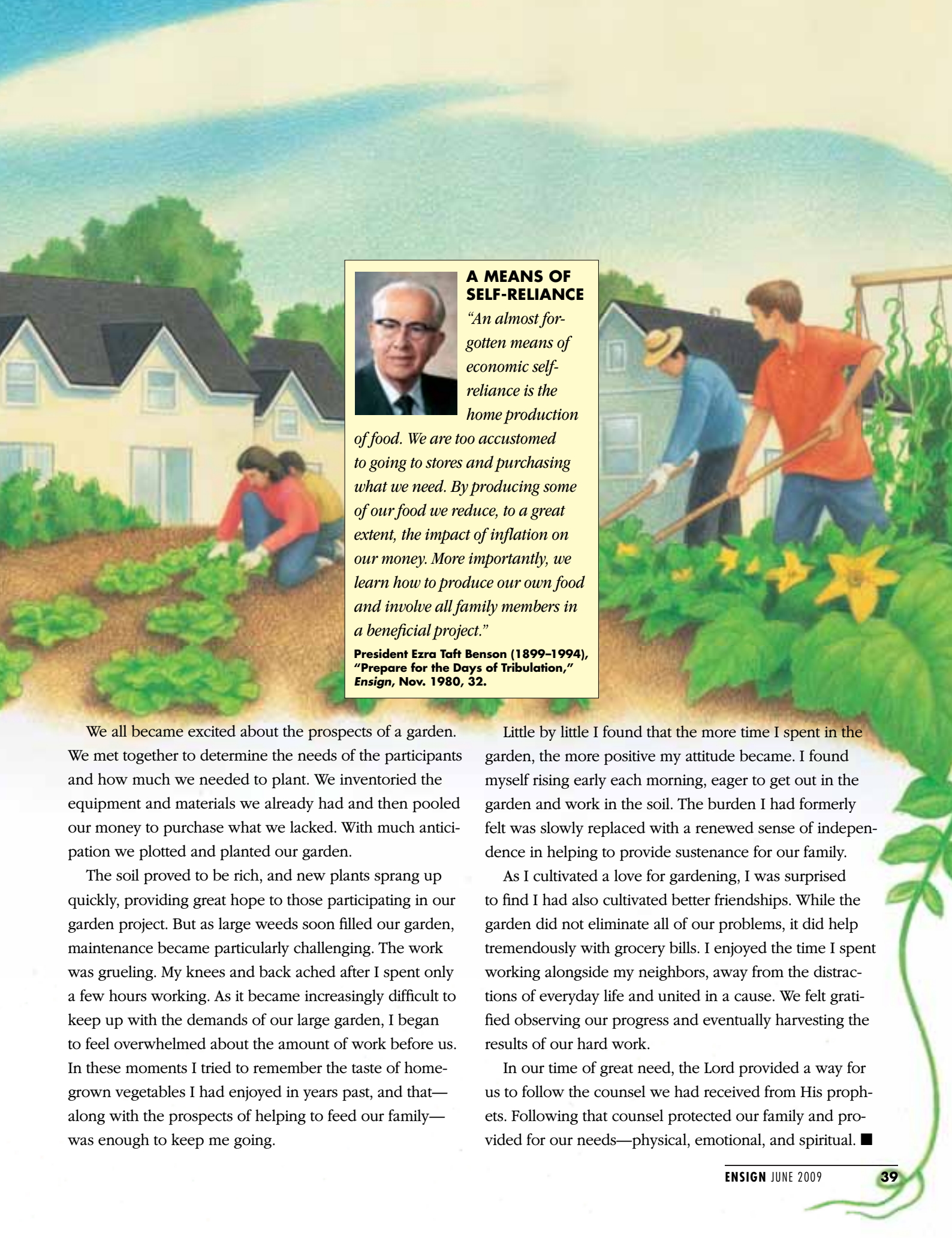
In time I married and began a family. I heard prophets and apostles counsel members to plant gardens, and I longed to do so. However, we lived in a small townhouse complex and had no room for a garden. I continued to learn about plants and to admire other people's gardens, usually with a wistful sigh in my heart.

About this time, our young family faced some serious financial strain. Neighboring families were facing similar

difficulties, although for varying reasons.

But in the midst of our struggles, the Lord provided a great opportunity for us to combat the challenges.

The man who owned the large open field behind our complex had tried to sell the property but had been unable to do so. Since it was vacant and not likely to sell in the near future, he gave our family and neighbors permission to use his field to plant a community garden. We did not have the equipment to till the land, but our Relief Society president's husband offered to till the ground for us with his equipment. The generosity of these men touched my heart.



A MEANS OF SELF-RELIANCE

“An almost forgotten means of economic self-reliance is the home production of food. We are too accustomed to going to stores and purchasing what we need. By producing some of our food we reduce, to a great extent, the impact of inflation on our money. More importantly, we learn how to produce our own food and involve all family members in a beneficial project.”

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), “Prepare for the Days of Tribulation,” Ensign, Nov. 1980, 32.

We all became excited about the prospects of a garden. We met together to determine the needs of the participants and how much we needed to plant. We inventoried the equipment and materials we already had and then pooled our money to purchase what we lacked. With much anticipation we plotted and planted our garden.

The soil proved to be rich, and new plants sprang up quickly, providing great hope to those participating in our garden project. But as large weeds soon filled our garden, maintenance became particularly challenging. The work was grueling. My knees and back ached after I spent only a few hours working. As it became increasingly difficult to keep up with the demands of our large garden, I began to feel overwhelmed about the amount of work before us. In these moments I tried to remember the taste of home-grown vegetables I had enjoyed in years past, and that—along with the prospects of helping to feed our family—was enough to keep me going.

Little by little I found that the more time I spent in the garden, the more positive my attitude became. I found myself rising early each morning, eager to get out in the garden and work in the soil. The burden I had formerly felt was slowly replaced with a renewed sense of independence in helping to provide sustenance for our family.

As I cultivated a love for gardening, I was surprised to find I had also cultivated better friendships. While the garden did not eliminate all of our problems, it did help tremendously with grocery bills. I enjoyed the time I spent working alongside my neighbors, away from the distractions of everyday life and united in a cause. We felt gratified observing our progress and eventually harvesting the results of our hard work.

In our time of great need, the Lord provided a way for us to follow the counsel we had received from His prophets. Following that counsel protected our family and provided for our needs—physical, emotional, and spiritual. ■