The Boy and the Garden Toad
Aysel Banu YAVUZAL

The Boy and the Garden Toad

Aysel Banu YAVUZAL

Ben loved his garden more than anywhere else in the world. Every morning after breakfast, he pulled on his red rubber boots and ran outside. He had a canvas satchel with a magnifying glass inside, and he used it to look at everything. Worms, beetles, wiggly things under stones — Ben wanted to see them all. His short chestnut hair stuck up at the back, and his hazel eyes were always wide and curious.

One warm afternoon, Ben was digging near the old stone wall when something moved in the shade. It was small and brown and lumpy, about the size of his palm. Ben froze and held his breath. The creature had warty olive-brown skin and big golden eyes with funny horizontal pupils. It sat very still, crouched low, and blinked at him slowly.

"Mum!" Ben called. "Come quick! There's a strange bumpy animal by the wall!" His mum came over in her mustard-yellow cardigan and straw hat, peeling off her green gardening gloves. She knelt down beside him and smiled her kind smile. "That's a garden toad, Ben," she said softly. "He's shy, so let's be gentle and quiet. We can watch him from here."

Ben crouched low in his green t-shirt and watched the toad through his magnifying glass. He saw the two little bumps behind the toad's eyes and its pale cream belly. The toad took one slow hop and then another, hiding under a big leafy plant. "He's looking for a safe home," said Mum. "Somewhere cool and damp and hidden. Toads need that, Ben."

"What else do toads need?" Ben asked, writing nothing down but remembering everything. His mum pulled off her straw hat and fanned herself. "They need water to drink and soft ground to rest on," she said. "And most of all, they need gardens without pesticides. Those sprays hurt toads and frogs and bees and every little creature. Our garden must stay safe and kind."

Ben thought hard. He thought about the toad hiding under the leaves, looking for a home. "Mum," he said at last, "what if we make him a special corner? A cozy place just for toads, with everything they need?" Mum's deep brown eyes crinkled with a smile. "That is a wonderful idea, Ben. I'll help you. Let's build him a safe home."

They found the perfect spot together — a shady corner beside the stone wall where the sun stayed soft and the ground stayed damp. Ben carried flat stones one by one in his little arms. Mum gathered armfuls of fallen leaves that smelled like rain. "Stones for hiding under," Ben said, "and leaves for a soft bed. Toads like to burrow down deep."

Next, Ben found an old shallow dish in the shed and filled it with clean water. "Every living thing needs water," he said proudly, setting it in the corner. He tucked moss around the edges so little feet could climb in and out. His red boots were muddy now, and his chestnut hair was messier than ever. Ben had never felt happier in his whole life.

Mum stood back and looked at the corner. "It's good, Ben," she said. "But there's one more thing — a very important thing. No pesticides near this garden. Not ever. We keep our garden safe, and the toads stay safe too." Ben nodded seriously. "Then I'll pick weeds by hand," he said. "And I'll tell everyone. No sprays near the toad's home."

That evening, Ben sat quietly by the corner and waited. The garden grew dusky and still. Then — a rustle. A small shape hopped out of the leaves. It was the garden toad, olive-brown and warty, calm as could be. It hopped over to the water dish, looked around with its golden eyes, and settled into the soft moss with a little wiggle.

Ben held his breath. The toad sat inside its new home, blinking slowly, looking perfectly content. "It worked, Mum!" Ben whispered. "He likes it! He's safe!" He didn't shout or leap, because kindness means being quiet when someone needs calm. The toad stayed right there, and Ben felt a warm, happy feeling spread through his chest.

The next morning, Ben ran out in his red boots to check the corner. The toad was still there, tucked beside a flat stone. Ben smiled so wide you could see the little gap between his front teeth. "Good morning, toad," he said softly. "This is your safe home now. I'll keep it nice for you, I promise. Every single day."

All summer long, Ben looked after the corner. He kept the water dish full and picked weeds by hand. He never, ever used sprays. Sometimes he found the toad sitting in the damp shade, and sometimes it was hidden under the leaves — that meant it was happy and safe. Ben loved knowing it had somewhere cozy to rest.

One evening, Mum sat beside Ben on the garden step. "You know," she said, "because you made that corner safe, other little creatures found a home too. Beetles, worms, even a sleepy snail." Ben grinned. "Kindness to nature helps every living thing," he said. "That's what you taught me, Mum. One safe corner can help so many."

Now, whenever Ben walks through his garden with his magnifying glass, he always stops to say hello to the toad. It blinks its golden eyes at him, calm and content in its little stone-and-leaf home. Ben feels proud, because he listened, he cared, and he helped. And that, he thinks, is the best thing a boy can do for nature.

The garden toad is happy there, safe and sound in its cozy pesticide-free corner. And Ben is happy too. He learned that every creature needs a safe home — a little shade, a little water, a little kindness. If we take care of nature, nature takes care of us. That is the warm, wonderful lesson of the boy and the garden toad.