



# The Creative's Garden

*Onboarding Manual*

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**How to read this manual.** Start anywhere. Each chapter stands on its own. If you only read one, make it "The Ripple Effect" — it's the idea that makes everything else click.

# 01 Before You Begin

*A letter from the soil*

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You have a network. You've always had one. It lives in scattered text messages, half-remembered coffees, business cards you swore you'd file, and that person from the conference whose name you can almost recall if you close your eyes and think about the colour of their lanyard.

This tool doesn't build your network. It makes the one you already have visible.

The Creative's Garden is a single HTML file. No servers, no accounts, no subscription that quietly drains your card while you forget it exists. Everything you put in stays in your browser, on your machine, between you and your screen. Think of it as a journal that happens to have a force-directed graph.

You don't need to learn all seven modules tonight. Start with one person. Add their name, how you met, what you noticed about them. The rest will unfold when it's ready.

**Privacy first.** Your contacts, notes, and quiet assessments of who matters and why — none of it leaves your machine. Export your garden regularly, the way you'd back up something you'd hate to lose.

# 02 The Metaphor

*Why a garden, and not a database*

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Relationships are living things. You already know this — you feel it in the guilt of an unanswered email, the warmth of an unexpected message, the slow fade of someone you used to call every week.

A database doesn't capture that. A spreadsheet can't hold the weight of a friendship that shifted after you both became parents. A CRM wasn't built for the mentor who changed your career with a single sentence at the right moment.

A garden can. Gardens have seasons. Things bloom, go dormant, come back unexpected. Some plants thrive in shade. Some relationships need distance to grow. The metaphor isn't decoration — it's the operating system.

When you see a contact card slide from "Thriving" to "Wilting," that's not a red alert. It's an observation. The garden doesn't judge. It notices. What you do with the noticing is yours.

**The garden is patient.** It doesn't send push notifications or guilt-trip you about unanswered messages. It simply reflects what you put in. Tend it when you can. Leave it alone when you can't. It'll be here.

# 03 Installation

*The shortest chapter in any manual*

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Open the file. That's it.

The Creative's Garden is a single HTML file. Drag it into your browser — Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Edge, that browser you use because you're contrarian about browsers — and it runs. No installation, no dependencies, no build step, no terminal commands that make you feel like you're defusing a bomb.

It works offline. It works on a plane. It works in that cafe with the beautiful interior and the malicious WiFi. The file carries everything it needs inside itself, like a seed.

Save it somewhere you won't lose it. Your desktop. A folder called "tools I actually use." The cloud drive you trust. Wherever you keep the things that matter.

**Bookmark it.** Open the file in your browser, then bookmark it. Now it lives in your toolbar, one click away, looking like any other website — except it belongs entirely to you.

# 04 The Ripple Effect

*Change one thing, watch everything shift*

This is the single most important idea in the tool, and it takes thirty seconds to understand.

The Contact Vault is the source. Add someone there and they appear everywhere — a new node in the network map, a card in the garden view, a row in the value tracker. You don't have to wire anything up. You don't configure connections or set up integrations. It just happens.

Log an interaction and the ripple widens. Their "last touch" date updates, which slides their card between garden stages. The health score recalculates. The dashboard shifts. If you gave or received value, the balance sheet records it.

Strength — that quiet 1 to 5 rating — is the heartbeat. It controls how big their node glows in the map, how thick the edges between connected people appear, which garden column they occupy, and how the overall health ring scores your network. Change it, and the whole garden breathes differently.

Tags are the secret connective tissue. Two contacts who share a tag get linked by an invisible edge in the network map. The Story Lens reads your tags to find patterns. The Serendipity Engine uses them to suggest introductions you didn't know you were supposed to make.

**Everything feeds everything.** The numbers on the dashboard aren't decoration — they're the vital signs of something alive. One interaction logged today can shift three modules by tomorrow.

# 05 The Contact Vault

*Where every person gets the space they deserve*

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Think of this as a portrait gallery, not a spreadsheet. Each person carries a name, a role, a company, tags, notes, a strength rating, and a running log of every time you've crossed paths. The details matter, but only the name is required. Start with what you remember. Fill in the rest when it comes back to you.

## Adding a Contact

Click the green "Add Contact" button. You'll see fields for the essentials: name, role, company, email, phone, location. Below that, the fields that actually make this tool sing — relationship type, strength, tags, and notes.

Relationship type sorts people into five channels: collaborator, client, mentor, friend, or other. This isn't a hierarchy. A friend can be more valuable than a client. A mentor can become a collaborator overnight. Pick the one that feels right today. You can always change it.

Strength runs from 1 to 5. Five means thriving — you're in regular contact, the relationship is warm, there's mutual trust. One means dormant — the connection exists, but it's been silent long enough that you'd need to re-introduce yourself. Don't overthink this. Your gut knows.

## Tags

Tags are how the garden thinks. They're comma-separated words or phrases that describe what someone cares about, what you have in common, or what world they live in. "branding, dutch, typography" tells the garden that this person could connect with anyone else who carries those tags.

Be specific enough to be useful, broad enough to create connections. "design" connects everyone. "generative-art" connects the right people.

## Notes

Write what a spreadsheet wouldn't hold. How you met. What they said that stuck with you. The project that brought you together. The thing about their kid's school play that you should ask about next time. This field is freeform, private, and the closest thing to a relationship journal you'll find inside a piece of software.

## The Contact List

The left panel shows everyone, sorted alphabetically. Each entry carries a colour-coded avatar (generated from their name), their role, and a strength bar. Hover over any name and a small lightning bolt appears — click it to log an interaction before you forget why it mattered. Click the name itself to open their full profile on the right.

**Click any tag to filter.** The filter ripples through the entire garden — the network map, the garden view, all of it. Tags are the fastest way to answer "who do I know who cares about this?"

# 06 Logging Interactions

*The quiet discipline of showing up*

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An interaction is any moment of contact. A meeting, a call, a coffee, an email, a collaboration, an introduction you made, a gift you sent, an event you both attended. It doesn't have to be significant. A five-minute call counts. A "thinking of you" message counts. The garden notices what you record.

## How to Log

Open someone's profile in the Contact Vault. Click "Log Interaction." Pick a type, a date, and write a summary — what happened, what was discussed, what you noticed. Below that, two optional fields: Value Given and Value Received.

Value Given is what you offered — a referral, a piece of feedback, an introduction, a resource, your time. Value Received is what came back — advice, a new connection, an opportunity, honest criticism. You don't have to fill these in. But over time, the pattern they create will surprise you.

## Milestones

At the bottom of the interaction modal, there's a small checkbox: "Mark as Milestone." Check it for the moments that actually changed something — the first coffee, the collaboration that clicked, the introduction that opened a door, the honest conversation that deepened everything.

Milestones plant seeds in the soil. On their anniversary, or when that contact goes quiet, a Memory Bloom appears on their card — a glowing flower carrying the original memory. We'll talk more about that later. For now, just know: the garden remembers what you tell it to remember.

**Log it now.** Not later. Not when you have time. The best interaction log is the one written thirty seconds after the conversation ends, while you can still hear their voice. The details you think you'll remember are the first to fade.

# 07 The Network Map

*You've never seen your people like this before*

A living constellation. Every person is a node — coloured by relationship type, sized by how often you've connected. The lines between them thicken where shared tags pull them together. It's the kind of view that makes you sit back in your chair and say, "Huh. I didn't know it looked like that."

Drag anyone across the canvas. Watch the gravity shift. The physics simulation is real — nodes attract and repel each other based on their connections, their types, their shared language. Clusters form naturally. Outliers float to the edges. The shape of your network has a shape, and this is where you see it.

## Reading the Map

Node colour tells you the relationship type: blue-green for collaborators, green for clients, violet for mentors, gold for friends, rose for everything else. Node size reflects interaction frequency — the people you talk to most take up more space, which feels right.

Edge thickness shows connection strength between two people. Thick lines mean they share multiple tags or the same relationship type. Thin lines mean they're loosely connected — maybe one shared interest, one overlapping world.

Hover over any node to see the numbers: last interaction date, strength rating, the quiet ledger of value given and received. Double-click to fall straight into their profile in the Contact Vault.

## Controls

The top-right corner has zoom controls and a reset button. Use the filter to isolate a cluster by relationship type. The circle-dot button brings you back to the full view. On touch devices, pinch to zoom and drag to pan.

**Look for the lonely nodes.** The people floating at the edges with no connecting lines — they're not unimportant. They're unconnected. Add tags to bring them into the web, or ask yourself: is there someone they should meet?

# 08

## The Garden View

*The part where you see who you're forgetting*

Four columns. Thriving, Growing, Wilting, Dormant. Every contact lives in one of these stages, determined by the last time you showed up for them. The cards are colour-coded — green for healthy, gold for caution, rose for concern. It's gentle, but it's honest.

This is the module that most people open first thing in the morning. Not because it tells you what to do — it never tells you what to do — but because it shows you what you already know and haven't acted on yet. That name in the "Wilting" column? You've been meaning to reach out for weeks. The garden just made it visible.

### Card Anatomy

Each card shows the contact's name, their role, how many days since last contact, and their current strength rating. The badge in the corner — green, gold, or rose — is a traffic light for the relationship's recency. Click any card to jump to their full profile.

### Check Decay

The "Check Decay" button does the uncomfortable thing automatically: it scans every contact and weakens those you haven't touched in over 30 days. Strength drops by one point, and their card shifts columns accordingly.

This isn't punishment. It's observation. If a relationship has been silent for a month, the garden is reflecting that reality back to you. What you do with that information — a quick message, a coffee invitation, or the quiet acceptance that some connections have run their course — is entirely yours.

**Dormant doesn't mean dead.** Some of the most powerful reconnections happen after long silences. The garden keeps dormant contacts visible because disappearing them would be a lie. The roots are still there.

# 09

## Value and Reciprocity

*Not to keep score — to keep honest*

Every interaction can carry a note about what flowed in each direction — an introduction you made, feedback you received, a resource you shared, advice that landed. Over time, the pattern emerges: who are you generous with? Who is generous with you? Where is the current flowing one way?

This isn't about transactional thinking. The people who give the most rarely keep count, and the best relationships are wildly unbalanced in both directions at different times. But noticing the pattern? That's worth something. It tells you who your champions are. It tells you where you might be taking more than you're giving. It tells you which relationships have the kind of deep reciprocity that survives anything.

### The Value Table

The Value and Reciprocity tab shows a table of all contacts with value data. Each row has a progress bar — green for value given, blue for value received. The numbers aren't precise. They're impressionistic. One meaningful introduction counts more than ten forwarded articles, and the tool knows it.

### High-Potential Connectors

People with three or more tags light up as high-potential connectors. They sit at the intersection of worlds. They're the ones who could change someone's year with a single introduction. The garden highlights them because you might not have noticed how many worlds they bridge.

**The imbalance isn't always a problem.** A mentor who gives more than they receive isn't being exploited — they're fulfilling a role they chose. A client who receives more value than they give is a client being served well. Context matters more than arithmetic.

# 10 The Health Dashboard

*Vital signs of something alive*

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One number between 0 and 100, rendered as a ring. It's built from three ingredients: the average strength of your connections (40 points), how many you've actually spoken to in the past month (30 points), and whether your network has variety — collaborators and clients and mentors and friends, not just one flavour (30 points).

Below the ring: the at-risk list. These are the people going quiet. Each one has a "Nurture" button that opens the interaction log, pre-filled and ready. One click between silence and reconnection.

## Cluster Analysis

The bottom section shows the shape of your relationship types as a simple distribution. If three overlapping types have contacts that share tags, the garden will note it. This isn't advice — it's observation. Three collaborators who all care about typography? Maybe they should know each other. Maybe you're the person to make that happen.

## Reading the Score

A score of 80 or above means you're actively tending your garden — strong relationships, recent contact, good variety. 50 to 80 means there's room to grow, probably in recency or diversity. Below 50 means the garden is going quiet — not dying, but waiting for you to come back.

Don't chase the number. It's a mirror, not a target. The goal isn't a perfect score. The goal is the person you think of when you see it dip, and what you do next.

**The at-risk list is your morning ritual.** Open the dashboard, scan the names, pick one, send a message. Thirty seconds, one relationship saved from going dormant. Do it with your morning coffee and it stops feeling like work.

# 11 The Story Lens

*You're living inside patterns you can't see yet*

Six queries that pull threads from your data. Each one asks a different question of the soil, and the answers come back in prose, not charts. This isn't a dashboard. It's a mirror.

## The Six Queries

**Strongest Threads** — What do your highest-rated collaborators have in common? The garden reads their tags, their interaction frequency, their value exchange, and tells you the pattern. You might discover that your best working relationships all share a single tag you didn't think was important.

**Hidden Bridges** — Which two contacts from entirely different worlds share a hidden interest? The garden finds pairs who have never met but carry overlapping tags from different relationship types. These are your introduction opportunities.

**Dormant Gems** — High-strength contacts who've gone quiet. People with a rating of 3 or above who you haven't spoken to in over a month. The garden remembers their milestones, their last interaction, the thread you could pull to bring them back.

**Rising Stars** — Contacts with two or more interactions in the past 30 days and a strength of 3 or higher. These are the relationships currently gaining momentum. The garden sees growth before you do.

**The Gaps** — Where is your garden thin? Which relationship types have fewer than two contacts? Which tags have only one person attached to them? One more person in each thread is all it takes to turn a dead-end into a crossroads.

**Your Champions** — Who has given you the most value? Not the most interactions — the most meaningful contributions. Introductions, feedback, resources, doors opened. These are the people you build statues for, or at least send a thank-you note.

**Run the Story Lens quarterly.** The patterns shift as your network evolves. What was a gap last month might be a cluster today. What was a rising star might have gone dormant. The lens shows you where you've been and where you're heading.

# 12 The Serendipity Engine

*The introduction you didn't know you were supposed to make*

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Hit the sparkle button and the garden scans every pair of contacts, looking for the ones who don't know each other yet but probably should. It reads tags, relationship types, strength levels, and the quiet imbalance of who's given what to whom.

When it finds a match, it generates a warm introduction email — editable, personal, ready to send. The algorithm favours surprise: contacts from different worlds who share a hidden thread. A photographer and a brand strategist who both care about editorial. A developer and an art director who both work in generative art.

## How It Works

The engine scores every possible pair based on shared tags, complementary relationship types, and combined strength. It deprioritises dormant contacts — tend them first, then introduce them. It favours cross-type connections because those are the introductions that change things.

When you click "Copy and Send," the garden logs the introduction as value given for both contacts. The ripple updates their value balance, their interaction log, and the dashboard. One click, and three things get better at once.

## The Spark Button

When the garden detects good matches, the Spark button pulses gently in the network map. It's not an alarm — it's a nudge. The engine is patient. The opportunities will wait.

**The best introductions have a reason.** Not "you two should meet" — that's lazy and puts the burden on them. "You both care about editorial photography, and I think you'd enjoy a conversation" — that's a gift. The engine writes the second version.

# 13

## Memory Blooms

*Most tools forget — this one remembers*

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When you mark an interaction as a milestone, you're planting something in the soil. The garden remembers it. And at the right moment — an anniversary, a period of dormancy, a moment when you're about to reach out and don't know what to say — a Memory Bloom appears.

It's a small glowing flower on the contact's card, carrying the original memory. Click it, and you're writing a reconnection note before the moment passes. "I was just thinking about that time we..." — that's the kind of message that reopens doors.

### The Time-Lapse

The Memory Blooms tab includes a Time-Lapse view: the past twelve months of your garden compressed into a single bar chart. Each bar represents a month, its height showing how many interactions you logged. It's a small thing. But seeing the shape of a year — the busy months, the quiet ones, the gap you didn't realise was there — can shift how you think about the next one.

### Anniversary Detection

The garden tracks milestone dates and flags approaching anniversaries. These aren't calendar reminders. They're conversation starters. "It's been a year since we launched that project together" carries more weight than "just checking in."

**Mark fewer milestones, not more.** If everything is a milestone, nothing is. Save it for the moments that genuinely shifted something — the trust that deepened, the door that opened, the conversation you still think about months later.

# 14

## The Garden Oracle

*It knows what you know — it just says it differently*

The green orb floating in the bottom-right corner is the garden's quiet voice. It reads your data — strength, recency, balance, milestones — and tells you what it sees, wrapped in metaphor and stripped of jargon.

Ask it anything. "Who am I forgetting?" "How healthy is my network?" "Where are the gaps?" "What do my best people have in common?" It answers from your data, never from a server. The Oracle doesn't phone home. It phones you.

### Pre-Built Prompts

If you don't know where to start, the Oracle offers six prompts: Forgotten Roots, New Growth, Where to Plant Next, The Bridge, The Dormant Gem, and Network Weather. Each one runs a different analysis and returns a paragraph of prose — warm, specific, drawn from your actual contacts and their actual patterns.

### Custom Questions

Type anything into the input field. The Oracle tries to match your intent to one of its analyses. If it can't find a match, it gives you an honest overview of your garden's vital signs and suggests more specific questions to try.

The Oracle isn't AI. It's pattern recognition wrapped in prose. It can't give advice about your career or your life — but it can tell you things about your network that you've been too close to see.

**Ask the Oracle when you're procrastinating on a message.** "Who should I reconnect with?" is easier to act on when the answer comes with a name, a context, and a milestone to reference.

# 15

## Data, Import, and Export

*Your garden is portable*

Everything lives in your browser's localStorage — that quiet pocket of memory that disappears when you clear your browsing data. This is a feature, not a limitation. It means your data never leaves your machine. But it also means you're responsible for keeping it safe.

### Exporting

Go to the Files tab. Click "Export All (JSON)." A file downloads containing every contact and every interaction, formatted as JSON. Store it somewhere safe — a cloud drive, an encrypted folder, a USB stick in a drawer you trust. This is your backup. Treat it like one.

You can also export as CSV for contacts, which opens cleanly in any spreadsheet. The CSV doesn't carry interaction data — just the contact profiles. Use it when you need a flat list for another tool.

### Importing

The garden accepts JSON imports (its own format) and CSV files. When importing a CSV, the columns should match the contact fields: name, role, company, type, strength, tags, location, email, phone, notes. The garden will map what it can and skip what it can't.

### Cross-Tool Synergies

All Offline.Ltd tools speak the same JSON dialect. The speakers from your Event Organiser's Pond? They're not just speakers — they're collaborators, potential mentors, future friends. Import them here and their event history becomes relationship context.

The beta testers from your Product Launch Lab. The investors from your Founder's Knife. The press contacts who showed up for your launch. They all have a place in this garden. Your people can travel between worlds.

**Export weekly.** Set a reminder. Make it a habit. The data lives in your browser, and browsers are mortal. A thirty-second export can save a year's worth of relationship intelligence.

# 16

## Keyboard Shortcuts and Navigation

*For when your hands know the way*

The Creative's Garden is built for mouse and touch, but the tab bar responds to clicks on the module names along the top of the screen. Each tab carries a small counter badge showing how many items it holds — the vault shows your contact count, the garden shows at-risk relationships, the dashboard shows your health score.

### Tab Navigation

The seven module tabs run along the top: Vault, Network, Garden, Value, Health, Story, and Files. Two system tabs sit to the right: Blooms and Help. Click any tab and the content below shifts with a gentle fade animation. The URL doesn't change — there are no routes, no page loads, no back-button confusion.

### Quick Actions

From any tab, you can add a contact using the green button in the Contact Vault header. The interaction log modal can be opened from the vault's contact list (hover to reveal the lightning bolt), from the garden view (click any card), or from the health dashboard's at-risk list (click "Nurture").

The theme toggle sits in the top-right header — a small pill-shaped switch. Click it to move between dark and light modes. Your preference persists across sessions.

**The Garden Oracle is always available.** The green orb in the bottom-right corner floats above every module. You don't need to switch tabs to ask it a question.

# 17 Philosophy of Use

*The garden grows in the cracks*

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You don't need a dedicated "networking hour." The best use of this tool is five minutes here, two minutes there. Log an interaction right after it happens. Check the garden view while you wait for coffee. Glance at the health dashboard before you start your day. The garden grows in the cracks between other things.

Don't try to be comprehensive. Some people will never make it into the garden, and that's fine. This isn't a record of everyone you've ever met — it's a curated collection of the people who matter to your creative life right now. When someone stops mattering, you don't delete them. You let them go dormant. The garden holds space for what might return.

Resist the urge to optimise. The health score is a mirror, not a target. The network map is a portrait, not a blueprint. The value tracker is a memory, not a ledger. The moment you start gaming the numbers, the tool stops being useful and starts being a chore.

The most important feature isn't any of the seven modules. It's the act of pausing, even briefly, to think about the people in your life. Who have you been meaning to call? Who surprised you recently? Who would benefit from knowing each other?

If this tool does nothing more than prompt those three questions once a week, it's done its job.

**Your garden doesn't end here.** It extends into the real world — into the message you send, the coffee you schedule, the introduction you make. The tool is the soil. You're the gardener. The relationships are the thing that actually grows.

# 18 Troubleshooting

*When the soil feels dry*

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## My data disappeared

You probably cleared your browser data, or you're opening the file from a different location than usual. Browsers tie localStorage to the file's path — if you moved the HTML file, the browser treats it as a new site. Solution: move the file back to its original location, or import your most recent JSON export.

## The network map is slow

Force simulations get heavy with large datasets. If you have over 100 contacts, the map may take a moment to settle. Let it breathe. The physics need time to find their equilibrium, just like the relationships they represent.

## I can't see the Oracle

The Oracle floats in the bottom-right corner. On small screens, it might be partially hidden. Try scrolling to the bottom of the page, or switch to a wider viewport. The Oracle is always there — sometimes it's just shy about showing itself.

## My CSV import didn't work

Check your column headers. The garden expects: name, role, company, type, strength, tags, location, email, phone, notes. The order doesn't matter, but the names do. Tags should be comma-separated within a single cell. If all else fails, export a JSON from the garden first, study the format, and match it.

## The theme toggle isn't working

Rare, but possible. The theme preference is stored in localStorage under the key 'creatives\_garden\_theme.' If your browser blocks localStorage for local files, the toggle won't persist. Try adding the file to a local server (even a simple Python one will do) or allowing localStorage for file URLs in your browser settings.

**When in doubt, export and reimport.** The garden's JSON format is its source of truth. As long as you have a recent export, you can recover from almost anything.



# 19

## Understanding Relationship Types

*Five channels, no hierarchy*

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The garden sorts people into five relationship types: collaborator, client, mentor, friend, and other. This isn't a taxonomy — it's a lens. The same person might be a collaborator today and a friend by December. The type you choose shapes how they appear in the map, how the health score weights them, and what the Serendipity Engine does with their connections.

### Collaborators

People you make things with. Co-creators, co-authors, design partners, developers who build what you dream up, writers who articulate what you can't. The relationship is defined by shared output — there's something in the world that wouldn't exist without both of you.

Collaborators tend to cluster tightly in the network map. They share tags, share methods, share the particular exhaustion that comes from shipping something together. The garden pays attention to these clusters because they reveal your creative centre of gravity — the kind of work that keeps pulling you back.

### Clients

People who hire you, commission you, or sustain your work financially. The word carries baggage — "client" sounds transactional, and the best client relationships are anything but. A client who trusts your judgment, who gives you room to experiment, who comes back year after year — that's not a transaction. That's a partnership with an invoice attached.

The garden tracks clients separately because their rhythm is different. Client relationships often go dormant between projects, and that's normal. A collaborator going silent for three months is concerning. A client going silent for three months just means the next project hasn't started yet.

### Mentors

People who've walked the path ahead of you and bothered to leave markers. Also people you mentor — the relationship flows both ways, even if the power dynamics don't feel equal. The garden doesn't distinguish between mentor and mentee because the distinction matters less than you think. The best mentorship is mutual. You just don't always notice what you're giving back.

## Friends

People whose presence in your life isn't contingent on a project, a contract, or a shared professional interest. They'd still be in your life if you changed careers tomorrow. The garden gives friends a gold colour — warm, steady, not flashy. Friends are the root system that holds everything else up.

## Other

The honest catch-all. The person you met once at a conference who might become anything. The journalist who covered your work. The neighbour who turns out to be a photographer. "Other" isn't lesser — it's unresolved. Give it time. The garden will help you see what it becomes.

**When in doubt, pick "other" and revisit later.** The type isn't permanent, and getting it wrong costs nothing. The garden cares more about the tags you assign than the type you choose.

# 20 Working with Tags

*The invisible threads that connect everything*

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Tags are the most underrated feature in the garden, and the one most likely to determine whether the tool feels useful or feels like a chore. Here's the short version: tags are how the garden thinks. They create the invisible connections between people who might not know each other yet but probably should.

## Choosing Good Tags

A tag should describe what someone cares about, what world they operate in, or what you have in common with them. "branding" is a tag. "dutch" is a tag. "generative-art" is a tag. "nice person" is not a tag — it doesn't create meaningful connections.

Aim for the sweet spot between too broad and too narrow. "design" connects everyone, which means it connects no one meaningfully. "responsive-email-template-design" connects one person, which means it connects no one at all. "typography" is about right. "editorial-photography" is about right. You'll develop instincts for this.

## How Tags Create Connections

When two contacts share a tag, the network map draws an invisible edge between them. The more tags they share, the thicker the edge. This is how clusters form — not from your explicit choices, but from the patterns in your language.

The Story Lens reads tags to find Hidden Bridges — pairs of contacts from different relationship types who share unexpected common ground. The Serendipity Engine uses tags to generate introduction suggestions. Tags are the raw material for every analytical feature in the garden.

## Tag Housekeeping

Every few weeks, scan your tag list in the Files tab. Look for duplicates ("UX" and "ux-design" mean the same thing to you but not to the garden), orphans (tags with only one contact), and overgrown tags (tags that apply to half your garden and have lost their meaning). A clean tag system is like weeded soil — everything grows better in it.

**Start with three to five tags per contact.** You can always add more later, but starting with too many dilutes the signal. Ask yourself: if I could only describe this person with five words, what would they be?

# 21 Your First Week

*A gentle onboarding rhythm*

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## Day One: Plant the First Five

Don't try to add everyone you know. Start with five people — the five you've thought about most in the past week. Add their names, their roles, and one or two tags each. Write a note about how you met. Set their strength. That's it. Five seeds in the soil.

Open the network map after you've added them. Even five nodes have a shape. Notice which ones share tags. Notice which ones float alone. The map is already telling you something.

## Day Two: Log What Already Happened

Think about the past week. Which of your five people did you interact with? A call, an email, a coffee, a message. Log those interactions now. They don't have to be detailed — "Quick call about the project" is enough. The garden needs data to work with, and the data comes from your memory of ordinary moments.

## Day Three: Add Five More

Another five people. This time, try to include at least one from a different relationship type than your first batch. If your first five were all collaborators, add a client or a mentor. Diversity makes the garden interesting and the health score meaningful.

## Day Four: Check the Garden View

Open the Garden tab. Look at where your ten contacts fall — Thriving, Growing, Wilting, Dormant. The placement is based on the interactions you logged, and it might surprise you. Someone you consider close might show up as "Wilting" because you haven't actually spoken in a month. That's the garden doing its job — making the invisible visible.

## Day Five: Ask the Oracle

Open the Garden Oracle. Ask it: "Where are the gaps?" With only ten contacts, the answer will be broad — but it'll show you what the tool can do when the soil is richer. Ask "Who am I forgetting?" and see if

any names come to mind that didn't make your first ten.

## The Weekend: Let It Rest

Don't open the garden over the weekend. Let the relationships exist without being observed. When you come back on Monday, add anyone who crossed your mind while you were away. The best contacts to add are the ones that surface naturally — the names that float up when you're not trying to remember them.

**The goal for week one is momentum, not completeness.** Ten contacts and a handful of interactions is enough to see the garden's logic at work. The rest comes naturally, one name at a time, over weeks and months.

# 22 Advanced Patterns

*For when the roots go deep*

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## The Monthly Review

Once a month, spend twenty minutes with your garden. Open the Health Dashboard. Scan the at-risk list. Click "Check Decay" in the Garden View and see who's shifted columns. Run the Story Lens queries. This isn't maintenance — it's reflection. The twenty minutes will pay for themselves in the quality of the messages you send afterward.

## Introduction Chains

When the Serendipity Engine suggests an introduction and you make it, log it as an interaction for both contacts. Over time, the value tracker builds a picture of your introduction patterns — who you connect, which worlds you bridge, where your social capital flows. Some people discover they're natural connectors. Others discover they've been hoarding their network without realising it.

## Seasonal Pruning

Twice a year, review your dormant contacts. Not to delete them — the garden doesn't delete — but to ask: is this connection worth reviving, or has it run its course? Some relationships are seasonal. They bloomed, they bore fruit, they went to seed. That's not a failure. That's a life cycle.

The contacts you don't prune become part of the garden's long-term memory. They're still there when you need them, still carrying their tags, still connected to the people they used to be connected to. Dormancy isn't death. It's winter.

## Cross-Pollination with Other Tools

If you use other Offline.Ltd tools — the Event Organiser's Pond, the Product Launch Lab, the Founder's Knife, Story Forge — the garden can receive and send data in JSON format. Speakers from your events become contacts. Contacts from your garden become characters in your stories. The ecosystem is designed for this kind of cross-pollination, and the format is intentionally simple enough to modify by hand if you need to.

## Building a Second Brain for Relationships

The garden's notes field is more powerful than it looks. Over time, a contact's notes become a living document — how you met, what you've discussed, what they care about, what they're struggling with, what you promised to send them. When you open someone's profile before a meeting, those notes become your preparation. When you open them before writing a message, they become your voice.

**The garden rewards patience.** The insights that emerge after six months of use are qualitatively different from what you see in week one. The Story Lens needs data to find patterns. The Serendipity Engine needs breadth to find surprises. Give the soil time.

# 23 A Final Word

*From the gardener to you*

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You made it to the end of a manual. That alone says something about you — either you're thorough, or you're procrastinating on something you should be doing instead. Either way, you're here, and that counts.

The Creative's Garden was built on a simple conviction: the tools you rely on shouldn't rely on someone else's server. Your relationships are yours. Your data is yours. Your quiet assessments of who matters and why — those are yours too.

This is one file. No subscriptions, no telemetry, no growth team analysing your engagement metrics. Just a garden that stays where you plant it and grows at whatever pace you choose.

Go add someone. The first name is the hardest. After that, the garden does what gardens do.

Version 1.2 · 2026

Offline.Ltd — Tools that stay where you plant them.

# The Creative's Garden

*Seven modules. Three quiet enchantments. One file.*

No servers. No subscriptions. No one watching.  
Just a garden that stays where you plant it.

**OFFLINE.LTD**

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