

## A Commonplace Garden

*"Flowers are restless to look at.  
They have neither emotions nor conflicts."*  
~Sigmund Freud

*"The more the merrier is my motto, let my beds be an Ellis  
Island of natives and immigrants whose cultures blend into a  
beautiful mix. But the road to excess leads to the castle of  
indolence, and hodgepodge beds take a lot of upkeep."*  
~Diane Ackerman

*"It is good advice, in the garden and beyond, to love what loves  
us back, and not to covet what loves the gardens of others."*  
~David Culp

*"Even the best gardener is not so much a conductor as a  
cross between the caretaker making sure the light bulbs are  
replaced and the member of the audience with the best seat  
in the house."* ~Monty Don

*"[The ideal garden] is like opening the curtains of a theatre. It  
is a stage, and all these performers—an international cast of  
plants—they each have something to give me."*  
~Roy Lancaster

*"Gardening is more accessible than other creative endeavors,  
such as painting and music, because you are halfway there  
before you start; the seed has all its potential."*  
~Sue Stuart-Smith

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## Planting the Sand Cherry

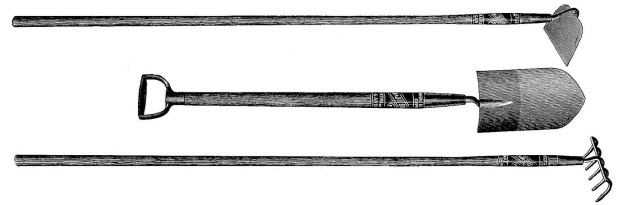
Today I planted the sand cherry with red leaves—  
and hope that I can go on digging in this yard,  
pruning the grape vine, twisting the silver lace  
on its trellis, the one that bloomed  
just before the frost flowered over all the garden.  
Next spring I will plant more zinnias, marigolds,  
straw flowers, pearly everlasting, and bleeding heart.  
I plant that for you, old love, old friend,  
and lilacs for remembering. The lily-of-the-valley  
with cream-colored bells, bent over slightly, bowing  
to the inevitable, flowers for a few days, a week.  
Now its broad blade leaves are streaked with brown  
and the stem dried to a pale hair.  
In place of the silent bells, red berries  
like rose hips blaze close to the ground.  
It is important for me to be down on my knees,  
my fingers sifting the black earth,  
making those things grow which will grow.  
Sometimes I save a weed if its leaves  
are spread fern-like, hand-like,  
or if it grows with a certain impertinence.  
I let the goldenrod stay and the wild asters.  
I save the violets in spring. People who kill violets  
will do anything.

~Ann Struthers  
Writer in Residence at Coe, Retired

# The Garden Quarto

*"The qualities that make plants invasive  
are numerous. . . . great ability to spread their  
seeds; rapid growth; the capacity to alter their  
form in response to environmental conditions,  
tolerance of multiple kinds of stress;  
capability of associating with humans. . . .  
the qualities that describe intelligence."*

~Stefano Mancuso



## Fall 2021

### A Garden's End

Forsythia, scaled and bud-bangled,  
I pruned to a thatch of leaves  
for the curb, by the squirrel-gnawed  
corn, silk strewn, kernels tooth carved  
and husks shorn over the ground  
pocked with paw prints.

The borers mashed the squash vine,  
the drought tugged the roots of sage,  
catmint languished by the sidewalk,  
tools grew flowers of rust.

That winter we left our hope  
beneath the snow, loved through the last  
of the onions, watched the late leeks freeze  
to crystal, bent like sedges, their shadows  
on the snow. That winter we left  
our hope beneath the snow.

~ Gabriel Welsch  
from *Dirt and All Its Dense Labor*

*"It is a great responsibility to plant a tree, anywhere.  
A tree will in all probability outlive the planter, who may  
own the soil where it grows but can scarcely be said to own  
the tree, a product of the soil and of greater nature."*  
~Graham Stuart Thomas

## Chiller Pansies

Your pansies died again today.  
All June I've watched them scorch and fall  
by noon, their faces folding down  
to tissue-paper triangles.  
I bring them back with water, words,  
a pinch, but they are sick to death  
of resurrection. You planted them  
last fall, these "Chillers" guaranteed  
to come again in spring. They returned  
in April—you did not. You who said  
pick all you want, it just makes more!  
one day in 1963,  
and I, a daughter raised on love  
and miracles, believed it.

~Debra Wierenga

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## Goldenrod and Asters

Bees perceive many flowers differently than humans do due to their perception of additional spectra such as ultraviolet radiation. As it turns out, though, goldenrod and asters appear very similarly to bee eyes and human eyes. We both think they're beautiful. Their striking contrast when they grow together makes them the most attractive target in the whole meadow, a beacon for bees. Growing together, both receive more pollinator visits than they would if they were growing alone. It's a testable hypothesis; it's a question of science, a question of art, and a question of beauty.

Why are they beautiful together? It is a phenomenon simultaneously material and spiritual, for which we need all wavelengths, for which we need depth perception. When I stare too long at the world with science eyes, I see an afterimage of traditional knowledge. Might science and traditional knowledge be purple and yellow to one another, might they be goldenrod and asters? We see the world more fully when we use both.

~Robin Wall Kimmerer

Passage from *Braiding Sweetgrass*

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## December

On the fire escape, one  
stupid petunia still blooms,  
purple trumpet blowing  
high notes at the sky long  
after the rest of the band  
has packed up  
and gone home.

~Sarah Freligh  
From *Sad Math*



## Raspberries

When my first baby was just three days old  
Friends brought, in an old bucket,  
Several thorny raspberry canes  
Each trailing white-haired roots  
And clods of beetle-black soil  
From an especially teeming patch  
In need of thinning.  
We planted them in a back corner  
Thinking of pies,  
Of sun warmed fruit and red juice  
That would stain chubby fingers  
And be wiped from sweet mouths.  
I outlined a generous space with bricks  
A neat straight line, the perimeter  
of this new garden bed.  
Seven years on,  
The handful of canes have unfolded  
Into unruly tumble.  
The brick border has been lost,  
half buried, far overgrown.  
And still the thorny brambles twist and twine  
Like the neurons and synapses that must be  
Coiling, corkscrewing  
In my boy's growing brain.  
Or like his tawny tangled mop of hair  
That he won't permit to be cut  
And that makes him a wild and fabulous beast.  
He grows, flourishes,  
Shooting up and over  
All hemming borders.

When they ripen from white to pink  
To deepest red  
I will send him out to pick the berries.  
He will harvest a few  
To bless our morning oatmeal  
But mostly  
He will stand and eat what he picks  
The juice staining mouth and fingers  
He will whoop and howl  
A cub calling to his pack.

~Betsy Herrman  
Coe Alum '07

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## Deaths of Flowers

I would if I could choose  
Age and die outwards as a tulip does;  
Not as this iris drawing in, in-coiling  
Its complex strange taut inflorescence, willing  
Itself a bud again—though all achieved is  
No more than a clenched sadness,

The tears of gum not flowing.  
I would choose the tulip's reckless way of going;  
Whose petals answer light, altering by fractions  
From closed to wide, from one through many  
perfections,  
Till wrecked, flamboyant, strayed beyond recall,  
Like flakes of fire they piecemeal fall.

~E. J. Scovell