

A Commonplace Garden

"I prefer winter and fall, when you feel the bone structure of the landscape—the loneliness of it, the dead feeling of winter. Something waits beneath it, the whole story doesn't show."
~Andrew Wyeth

"In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy."
~William Blake

*"It is the life of the crystal, the architect of the flake,
the fire of the frost, the soul of the sunbeam.
This crisp winter air is full of it."*
~John Burroughs

*"The most serious gardening I do would seem very strange
to an onlooker, for it involves hours of walking round
in circles, apparently doing nothing."*
~Helen Dillon

*"For man, autumn is a time of harvest, of gathering together.
For nature, it is a time of sowing, of scattering abroad."*
~Edwin Way Teale

*No two gardens are the same.
No two days are the same in one garden.*
~Hugh Johnson

"Let us love winter, for it is the spring of genius."
~Pietro Aretino

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It Was a Summer Dream

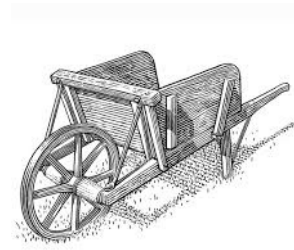
It was a summer dream
to work in a garden,
to learn about nature, flowers,
and myself during a most chaotic time.
Working in a garden gave me a chance
to change myself in the way
I view life and see my surroundings.
Every time in the garden,
whether working or just relaxing,
I could be myself.
I grew as I listened to the gardener,
learning not only how
to care for the plants and flowers—
but also how to enjoy the beautifulness of gardening.
I learned carefulness from the gardener's tidy handwriting,
the kindness from his sharing, his positive energy.
I am thankful for the hat
that saved me from the heat of the summer,
for the lemon-scented spray
that saved me from the bugs.
I am thankful for the vegetables,
the healthy organic food that saved my health.
I am thankful for the chance
to be a small part of a garden.

~Anh Nguyen (Coe student)

The Garden Quarto

*Nature will bear
the closest inspection.
She invites us to lay our eye
level with her smallest leaf,
and take an insect view
of its plain.*

~Henry David Thoreau



Fall 2020

To a Pioneer Mother by the Boone River

Your home, which no longer exists, hangs in my mind.
I have never seen it but know it was there, for
buried in the woods, my childhood's secret place,
was a garden, rank and overgrown.

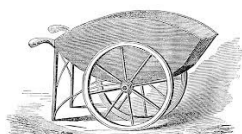
A crumpled fence held in a crush of trees—
apples, cherry, and wild plum for jam.
A wealth of flowers, all those for miles around,
had been brought to this, their special Eden.

No house remained—just some rocks to trace its
form and suggest the home of logs it must have been.
I peopled it with you, lonely in that wooded place—
no town for miles, no neighbors, no family near.

I knew it was you who filled your space with dainty
ferns, hepatica, and wild sweet william. They must
have made you feel less far from home where only
civilized flowers had grown and manners flourished.

You had your dreams as you tended your flowers—
your children would grow, and you would all prosper
in this new land. You could not know
your garden would outlive you all.

~Donna M. Cole (from her book of poetry, *Inside Out*,
with art work by J. Preston Cole)



Bishop's Lace Grows Rampant

ON THE ROADWAYS. It's true, our favorite flower
is a weed. It smells like the sacristy where

as an altar girl
I adorned a white robe and rang the bells

for *Hallelujah*. For transformations pay attention and
rejoice.

Once while drunk
he said he hated elegance

only something ragged could be beautiful
and I wondered if that meant
I was beautiful. In each head

of bishop's lace a hundred small flowers
constellate and transform into ragged bursts
of light. *Hallelujah*.

He phones from across the country
after lying in the grass with another and watching a
shower of meteors
stream down the sky —

a once-in-a-century phenomenon my longing to be
beside him.

Alone among the bishop's lace
I turn my head toward darkness

but never encounter
a single ringing bell. *Hallelujah!*
Descent of dust
has been transformed,

Look there
he whispers as if

they were flowers he could pluck for her. From a thousand

miles away I reach at love's
indiscernible arrangement:
another woman's ragged
and diaphanous
plummeting
stamens
of light.
~Bonnie Arning
Author of *Escape Velocity* (2017)

From "Hummingbird Pauses at the Trumpet Vine"

*Who doesn't love
roses, and who
doesn't love the lilies
of the black ponds*

*floating like flocks
of tiny swans,
and of course the flaming
trumpet vine*

*where the hummingbird comes
like a small green angel, to soak
his dark tongue
in happiness*
~Mary Oliver

Root and Leaf

Each summer day has its garden work,
and my task today is to divide the iris.
I spade up the matted roots:
the pale, ringed rhizomes twine and snake,
interlocked like puzzle pieces.

Each thickened wrist of root unfurls,
like a bent hand, a fan of leaves,
unforeseen after such odd turnings:
I brush away the loosened dirt
and prize from the twisted mass

one plant entire. My fingers trace
the swollen detour, root to leaf.

*A certain man went up toward Thebes
so as not to do a great evil.
On the road a stranger picked a fight.
At length he learned that evil, thought
left behind distant as the stars, was at hand.*

*A certain man went up toward Damascus
hastening to do a great evil.
On the road he was struck by blinding light.
At length he saw that good, unsought,
was by his hand far flung as the stars.*

Here in the garden's midst, a mass of iris!
I'm not the gardener to untwist
this maze, lay bare and trace the tales
of the man who fled evil and did evil
and the man who sped to evil and did good.

How grew these tales of routes, straight routes
that doubled? Were they gods' prodigies,
or did they grow true to nature?
Most of all, if they grew true,
which of these two was the good man?

~Jennifer MacKenzie (Coe Alum, 1948–2019)



*"Nature has no mercy at all.
Nature says, 'I'm going to snow.
If you have on a bikini and no snowshoes,
that's tough. I am going to snow anyway.'"*
~Maya Angelou

From "The Flower"

*Who would have thought my shrivel'd heart
Could have recover'd greenness? It was gone
Quite under ground; as flowers depart
To see their mother-root, when they have blown;
Where they together
All the hard weather,
Dead to the world, keep house unknown.*

*. . . And now in age I bud again,
After so many deaths I live and write;
I once more smell the dew and rain,
And relish versing: O my onely light,
It cannot be
That I am he
On whom thy tempests fell all night.*
~George Herbert