

## A Commonplace Garden

It is not graceful, and it makes one hot; but it is a blessed sort of work, and if Eve had had a spade in Paradise and known what to do with it, we should not have had all that sad business of the apple.

~Countess von Arnim

Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits. ~The Song of Solomon

Ther sprang the violete al newe,  
And fresshe pervinke rich of hewe,  
And floures yelow, whyte and rede:  
Swich plentee grew there never in mede.

~Geoffrey Chaucer

Oh, Adam was a gardener,  
And God who made him sees  
That half a proper gardener's work  
is done upon his knees,  
So when your work is finished,  
you can wash your hands and pray  
For the Glory of the Garden,  
that it may not pass away.

*And the Glory of the Garden it shall never pass away!*

~Rudyard Kipling

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## What I Would Like to Grow in My Garden

Peonies, heavy and pink as '80s bridesmaid dresses and scented just the same. Sweet pea, because I like clashing smells and the car I drove in college was named that: a pea-green Datsun with a tendency to backfire.

Sugar snap peas, which I might as well call memory bites for how they taste like being fourteen and still mourning the horse farm I had been uprooted from at ten.

Also: sage, mint, and thyme—the clocks of summer—and watermelon and blue lobelia.

Lavender for the bees and because I hate all fake lavender smells. Tomatoes to cut and place on toasted bread for BLTs, with or without the b and the l. I'd like, too, to plant the sweet alyssum that smells like honey and peace, and for it to bloom even when it's hot,

and also lilies, so I have something left to look at when the rabbits come. They always come. They are always hungry. And I think I am done protecting one sweet thing from another.

~Katherine Riegel

This poem will appear in  
Riegel's third book of poetry,  
*Love Songs from the End of the World.*

# The Garden Quarto

There are no green thumbs or black thumbs.  
There are only gardeners and non-gardeners.  
Gardeners are the ones who ruin after ruin  
get on with the high defiance of nature  
herself, creating in the very face  
of her chaos and tornado,  
the bower of roses and the pride of irises.

It sounds very well to garden a  
'natural way.' You may see the natural way  
in any desert, any swamp, any leech-filled  
laurel hell. Defiance, on the other hand,  
is what makes gardeners.

~Henry Mitchell, *The Essential Earthman*



## Spring 2019

### Passages from *A Woman Unashamed and Other Poems* by Paul Engle, Coe Alum (1931)

In the garden, you talk to me.  
I do not want to  
reply or shake my head.  
Even my hands hear you.

Above the fish pond  
the butterfly seems to listen  
to the red azalea speaking. . . .

~from "Variations on Love"

The painter puts two thin lines  
on one side of the page,  
and one line on the other side.  
Suddenly grass grows there!  
Between them, a wavering line.  
Water is moving!

~from "Water Color"

Water and rock are planted as if grass,  
The air cut into views like window glass.

From the dark depth of goldfish-flaunting ponds  
Temples are mirrored upward through fern fronds. . . .

Here human nature, nature itself deceives:  
Did men rub green into those glossy leaves,

Pour perfume in that crimson peony,  
Teach butterflies what wings were meant to be?

~from "Kyoto"

## The March to April

Two kildeer mouse-step  
Across the cement as if they  
Had nests to protect.

The grey squirrel drops down  
Into deep snow, trying to  
Drink from black water.

I can see snow tracks  
Where squirrels plunged into the snow,  
Searching for acorns.

The proud chickadee  
Sings out his spring song to me  
From the leafless tree.

Two shaggy deer, still  
In their winter coats, browse on  
Dead grass & brown leaves.

A Russian morning—  
Black trees muzzled in the mist;  
Day clings to my skin.

Geese like sentinels  
Stand in mist beside the path  
That's darkened with rain.

When I wake, the moon  
Shines gold on April snow &  
Yellow crocuses.

The blue jay explores  
The ice on the backyard pond—  
A cold morning sip.

The suppressed roar  
Of wind & snow threatens to  
Turn spring to winter.

~R. Drexler, Whipple Professor of English, Emeritus



## Does the Weather Permit? Upon Receiving an Invitation to the Clark Alumni House

Will we gather indoors  
suffocating on each other's breath?  
Or out in the chill wind,  
ruffled and bothered  
by March's withheld promise?

~Gina Hausknecht, John William King Professor  
of Literature and Creative Writing

I have always thought a Kitchin-garden a more pleasant Sight, than the finest Orangerie, or artificial Green-house. I love to see every Thing in its perfection, and am more pleased to survey my Rows of Colworts and Cabbages, with a thousand nameless Pot-herbs, spring up in their full Fragrancy and Verdure, than to see the tender Plants of foreign Countries kept alive by artificial Heats, or withering in an Air and Soil that are not adapted to them. ~Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, 6 September 1717

## Hanging Gardens Bourée

The heat dazzles  
in turmeric skin  
as indulgent fathers  
bring out beaming eyes  
in their children  
with laughs that crack  
like fountain fireworks

wood benches  
having been soaked  
in the secret language of birds  
play host to the wandering cat  
game of musical chairs

a wind swoops  
full of sudden mischief  
as it tugs hats  
and sniffs hair in curiosity  
a tango with tousles

velveteen tree spirits  
line the park with a hush  
come undone by conversation  
in locomotive breath

crooked teeth  
with whistles in them  
water bird-of-paradise patches  
held in the warm hands  
of a dripping mango sun.

~Mrinalini Harchandrai, Coe Alum (1999)  
from her book *A Bombay in My Beat*



## From Mosses from an Old Manse

It was one of the most bewitching sights in the world to observe a hill of beans thrusting aside the soil, or a row of early peas just peeping forth sufficiently to trace a line of delicate green. Later in the season the humming-birds were attracted by the blossoms of a peculiar variety of bean; and they were a joy to me, those little spiritual visitants, for deigning to sip airy food out of my nectar-cups. Multitudes of bees used to bury themselves in the yellow blossoms of the summer-squashes. This, too, was a deep satisfaction; although, when they had laden themselves with sweets, they flew away to some unknown hive, which would give back nothing in requital of what my garden had contributed. But I was glad thus to fling a benefaction upon the passing breeze with the certainty that somebody must profit by it, and that there would be a little more honey in the world to allay the sourness and bitterness which mankind is always complaining of. Yes, indeed; my life was sweeter than honey. . . . ~Nathaniel Hawthorne