

## A Commonplace Garden

*"Il faut cultiver notre jardin."* ~Voltaire, *Candide*

*"The garden floating in my mind shifts like a Mark Rothko painting as I slide a block of colour here and merge two colours there, make a path to break things up, plant a scribbly hedge to build a magnetic corner space. All gardeners have fantasy gardens, and many of them are painters."* ~Marc Hamer

*"My favorite gardens are the ones that have slightly gotten away from you."* ~Claudia Rothermere

*"Outside my work the thing I care most about is gardening, especially vegetable gardening."* ~George Orwell

*"Watching the things of the world come apart and recombine is core Zen work and the fundamental anchorage of every gardener's life."* ~Wendy Johnson

*"I am one of those odd creatures who actually enjoys weeding. I find it utterly absorbing, on my hands and knees stirring the earth, pulling out interlopers, looking at flowers and leaves up close, their patterns, their fragrance, familiarizing myself with their habit and what they like or don't like."* ~Paige Dickey

*"The fragrance of flowers is their prayer."* ~Peter Deunov

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### The Idea of the Garden

You do not know if it is the idea of the garden, the whole body of green and yellow and deep blue, swaying like one common intelligence, like a mind watching you as you come near. Or if it is another truth, a translation of the crow's call or the wren's song, of the lemon lilies, the sweet rockets and coral bells painting your own mute efforts at prayer a weakness. Like the soul's thirst, wanting to get back into the animal body. The idea of a simpler time. A man pulls weeds despite the sound, that echo of breakage. You use the tools you're given, trying not to give in to fear. Trying to see your remaining time. To live with the grass, before it takes you back.

~Michael S. Moos  
from *The Idea of the Garden*



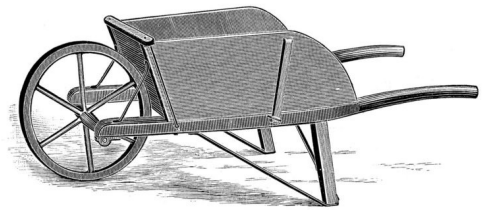
*Try to praise the mutilated world.  
Remember June's long days,  
and wild strawberries, drops of rosé wine.  
The nettles that methodically overgrow  
the abandoned homesteads of exiles.*

~Adam Zagajewski, "Try to Praise the Mutilated World"

## The Garden Quarto

*"In an age of lies and illusions, the garden is one way to ground yourself in the realm of the processes of growth and the passage of time, the rules of physics, meteorology, hydrology, and biology, and the realms of the senses."*

~Rebecca Solnit



## Spring 2022

### An Iowa Garden in January

The shadows of crows flying,  
a finch on a fence,  
the fountain filled with snow.  
The branches move in the wind,  
the wind tussling my hair,  
stinging my face.

Outside the garden,  
car doors shutting,  
the crunch of gravel,  
students walking,  
talking about the weekend.

The tall grasses bend  
as steam rises from the Alumni House chimney,  
and sunlight reflects  
off the steel gazing ball.  
Two squirrels climb over the fence.  
Five crows fly across  
a light blue sky.

The plants brown,  
the flowers dead,  
bags caught in trees,  
bunny tracks in flower beds.  
The sunlight on a sundial,  
the shadows of crows flying.

~Molly Baker  
Coe Student ('25)

## Reasons to Plant Raspberries

To cover the bones  
of your fence. To placate  
the crows. For the cleaning up  
late fall, canes cut to the ground.  
To anchor spring each winter  
in the soil of your mind  
bedded down in short days  
and bad light. For your loss  
and if you don't look back,  
for their willing return,  
the prickly canes every which way  
the sun warms them, a slow  
sketch, lines first then shaded in.  
For the bucket you wear  
around your neck. For both hands free  
to sweep the green aside.  
The thump of the morning's first.  
For the ripe and near ripe—a tug  
and the easy difference.  
For what they bear and will bear  
beyond you. For your table.  
For the robins' theft. For the two  
neighbor girls who ask  
and your watching them reach, year  
after year, into the leaves.  
For their growth spurts and hair  
tied back. For their chatter  
as if today has nothing to do  
with tomorrow.

~James McKean

From the *Baltimore Review* (Summer 2021)

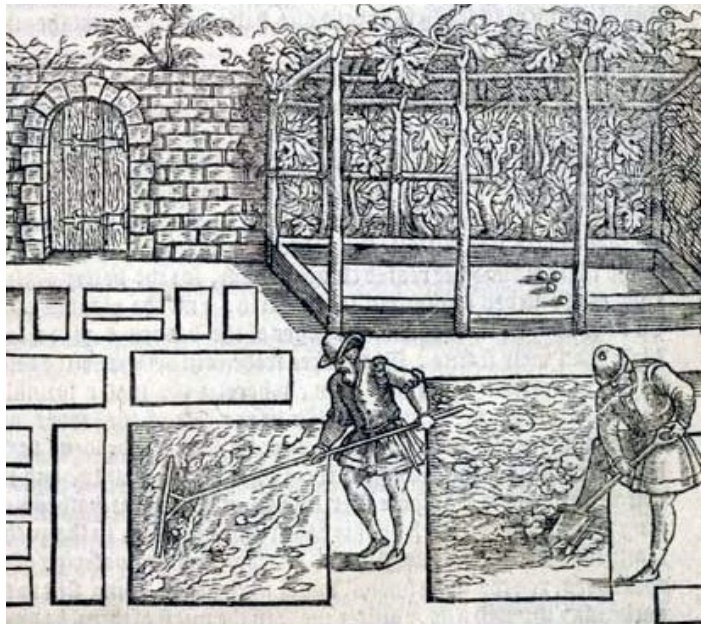


Illustration from *The Gardener's Labyrinth* (1577)  
by Thomas Hill

*I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.*

~W. B. Yeats, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree"

*"For those of us who choose to garden, there is nothing quite like the feeling of freedom that comes  
when you combine the cerebral with the physical." ~Dan Pearson*

## Two Unpublished Poems

### Linguistics

You must speak with a fruit tree.

Discover a new language,  
the language of cherry blossoms,  
apple-blossom words,  
pink and white words  
that the wind carries  
from them  
silently.

Trust in the fruit tree  
whenever an injustice happens to you.  
Learn to keep silent  
in the pink  
and white language.

~Hilde Domin

translated by Mark. S. Burrows



### In Praise of Mint

—For Anton Schlösser, poet of the dreaming world

What makes the world so true has something  
to do with time and art, with the longings of love  
and other surprises, like familiar things we've long  
lived with that still startle us as if they were new.

Among them the hardy mint comes to mind as  
worthy of praise, thriving along the edges of  
the fields and in my flowerboxes with an equal  
delight. It rises each spring from roots that have

endured another winter, taking no notice—so  
unlike us in this—of biting February winds, and  
glad for the soaking rains of spring, wandering  
promiscuously from place to place, respecting

no boundaries we set. They show us how to join  
ourselves to the flow of things, to greet what comes  
unbidden of gladness and of grief, like a sudden  
flare of fear triggered by an unexpected dream, or

seasons of loss that come to startle us suddenly,  
like the dazzle of a shooting star that streaks for  
a second across the vast canvas of the night sky  
and then is gone forever, so different in this

from the slow and steady progress of the mint.

~Mark S. Burrows

Author of *The Chance of Home: Poems*