A Commonplace Garden

"I like to think of gardens as sculpturing of space." ~Isamu Noguchi

"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. And then, standing up, as I need to do often now, I have the instant gratification of seeing what I've accomplished." ~Page Dickey

"If war has an opposite, gardens might sometimes be it, and people have found a particular kind of peace in forests, meadows, parks, and gardens." ~Rebecca Solnit

"I learned to garden with and not against nature." ~Dan Pearson

"I shall never have the garden I have in my mind, but that for me is the joy of it; certain things can never be realized and so all the more reason to attempt them. A garden, no matter how good it is, must never completely satisfy. The world as we know it, after all, began in a very good garden, a completely satisfying garden—Paradise—but after a while the owner and the occupants wanted more." ~Jamaica Kincaid

"Give away a good plant, throw away a bad one."
~Lady Serena James

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Walking to My Father's Grave, I Pass His Old Garden

The trees are gone. Not even a stump left to guide me. Instead there are rows of cabbages, snaps peas, carrots.

Where the blossom lay, the new owner's trench of leeks. In later years, the garden was all he knew of the world.

The idle release of a marigold and the apple's journey toward becoming the hard flesh he took back each morning

and consumed. It's what I'm thinking of today as I pass the garden, that soil's rich motor. What he gazed at

back then, cultivated now by a younger man. But why not make room for the yams, the sprouts? I'm on my way

with a handful of parsnips. After all, he had no time for the manicured lawns, nor jars of cut flowers

in shops and cemeteries. He preferred the wild clematis, the spectral wigs of dandelion flowers seeding

the chapel grounds, their clocks canceling above the dead.

~Adam Chiles Northern Virginia Community College

The Garden Quarto

"Plants are the first restoration ecologists.

They are using their gifts for healing
the land, showing us the way."

~Robin Kimmerer



Spring 2023

Garden Passages

from three Poems by Maxine Kumin

How can I help but admire the ever perseverant unquenchable dill that sways like an unruly crowd at a soccer match waving its lacy banners where garlic belongs or slyly invading a hill of Delicata squash—how can I help but admire such ardor?

On one of their daily walks she observes helpful details of Wm's famed daffodils. Then it's back to the garden at Grasmere

where she ties up her scarlet runner beans and pulls a bag of peas for Miss Simpson. Leave Wm in the wood to alter his poems; praise Dorothy in the garden at Grasmere.

Compost is our future.
The turgid brown mountain steams, releasing the devil's own methane vapor
Dirt to top-dress, dig in. Dirt fit for the gardens of commoner and king.

~Maxine Kumin from *Where I Live: New & Selected Poems* 1990-2010

Calendula

Through weed and tangle a flower at every portal:
tiny rings of fire expanding then folding
each day with sun---these blooms,
their shatter of petals, needles of orange light, nothing
you can suture together
like a woman, like me:
small scar, single stitch I took
though we had anointed the doorway her body would
make of me,

we had traced it and traced it.

Not with blossom but its ointment,
which he, nothing else to do during the push,
applied to keep me from tearing. Oh well.
Here in the blazing garden,
lazy white mothdrift, roostercrow and bluster
all day long, I press a single bud
in the back of a book to preserve something:
its color maybe, its watery stalk. I pop
some leaves in my mouth to taste the name:
marigold, little calendar, weatherglass, clock
that ticked those hours and minutes,
the seconds and me
unfurling.

How I worked to open.

~Amanda Moore (Coe Alum '97) from her book of poetry *Requeening*



To a White Butterfly in a Garden

Do you know the gardener is dissatisfied? She wants to bring the three white hydrangeas close together, adjust the placement of echinacea, curb the nepeta's wild spread.

I must tell her you are here, and how, in fluttering delight, you proclaim the blooming of this day enough to call forth deep and prayerful praise.

> ~Sally Witt Sister of St. Joseph of Baden, Pennsylvania



Waiting for Sunlight

Probably the hermit thrush is still asleep in the grapevine, waiting for sunlight to fall on the morning being covered over with the quilt of the summer's leaves, whirling their freedom through the clear cool air touching everything with its invisible bodiless sleeve. Maybe he waits for the wind, rising suddenly like a musician's quick breath feeding the nothing without, and the nothing within, the fist of his heart pausing, waiting for something to start the melody again, as the full moon, its blind eye drifting across the silent wingless sky, fades into the tree branches weighed down with their dark abundance. And the fallen leaves beckon with their ruined gold. Come, learn the hidden workings of the wild grapevine as it starts up again the slow engine of its transient beauty. Come, suffer with the dying garden as it returns to its long deep dream in the earth. Sing your winged life into the wind and blue sky!

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



Melting Snow in the Garden

I hear a train, a car horn, sirens, a fire alarm in the distance.

The wind picks up, and I hear the chimes. My phone rings, my mom calling.

I want to go home, but I feel homeless.

My family melting away like the snow on the ground.

My mom hangs up.
The green grass pokes through the snow, the garden so quiet
I can hear my heart beating.
A cloud shaped like a duck,
a single bird flying across the bright sky.
A hawk perches on a tree limb,
staring down at me in the garden.

My black jacket
absorbs the warm rays.
Water dripping, falling
on my head from the tree above,
the melting snow like a peaceful rainfall.
My shoes settle into the soggy ground.
A squirrel shakes water off its fur.
Another squirrel walks across a power line.
The hawk sits, observing.
Everything still and free.