

# 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*

