

Stories of the Seasons
A WFAN Zine



edited by Amie Adams & Piper Wood

“[We] stand together under a sky - that no matter how grey and uncertain - still holds room for butterflies, moths, dragonflies, and things we once were too fearful to name; things like whispered hope.” -Kerri ní Dochartaigh, *Thin Places*

WFAN's mission is to engage women and non-binary people in building an ecological and just food and agricultural system through individual and community power.

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Editor's Note

Dear friend,

I am overjoyed that you - wherever you are - are holding this little book in your hands.

Stories of the Seasons is WFAN's first zine and, truthfully, co-creating it with our team has been one of the most meaningful experiences of my life. Whenever I think about the beautiful, thoughtful words and art that fill these pages, I am met with a rush of gratitude. I just feel so *lucky*. I am spilling over with gratitude because so many imaginative, thoughtful, inspiring humans chose to share their work with us.

To our contributors: thank you for giving us the opportunity to gather up all this embodied ecological wisdom and curate it into a collection.

We asked for writing and art that celebrates seasonal living and activates hope in a changing climate, and you gave us more than we dreamed of. The out-pouring response to our call for submissions tells me that collectively, we all need these stories. We are longing for connection - to seasonal cycles, to little critters, to the plants who care for us, to one another, and to our living, breathing, aching planet. Reader, my hope for you is that you feel held by these stories, poems, songs, and paintings. May you encounter them with an open heart and come away filled.

I chose an epigraph from the brilliant Kerri ní Dochartaigh (may she forgive the small twist I put on it) to open the zine. Her book *Cacophony of Bone: The Circle of a Year* has been a powerful companion to me during the last phases of this project. But just as it is with the seasons, we are not headed for toward an ending. Rather, we are seeding so many fresh beginnings. As we prepare to send the zine out into the world, I imagine all of us under that buzzing sky, together with our living, breathing, aching hearts, unfurling a tapestry of hope. Grab hold; you are part of the stories of the seasons.

Amie Adams
September, 2024

something I want you to know

by Piper Wood

I'm writing this from the eye of another polar vortex

to you, rosy cheeked and
living in the future.

I want to tell you how it felt to hold seasons in your hand
burnt orange
icy crunchy
damp, soft, green and new
sweat dripping and cold lake plunges

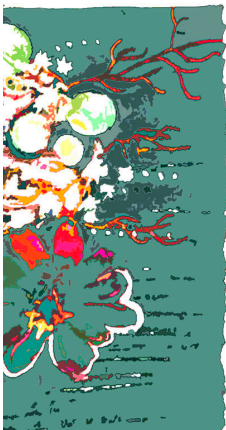
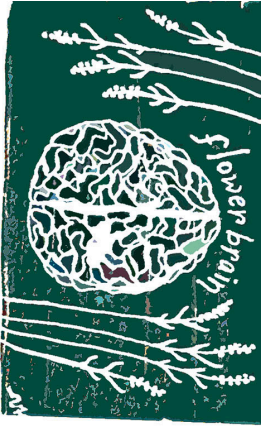
and repeat.

I wish you could know this instead of
mid-december lilac blooms and
too warm waters all the time

let me tell you this
how hepatica blooms on the hillside
in early april

how spring and summer rains taste
different on your tongue

please
open your hand and try to catch this fleeting thing
as I tell it to you.

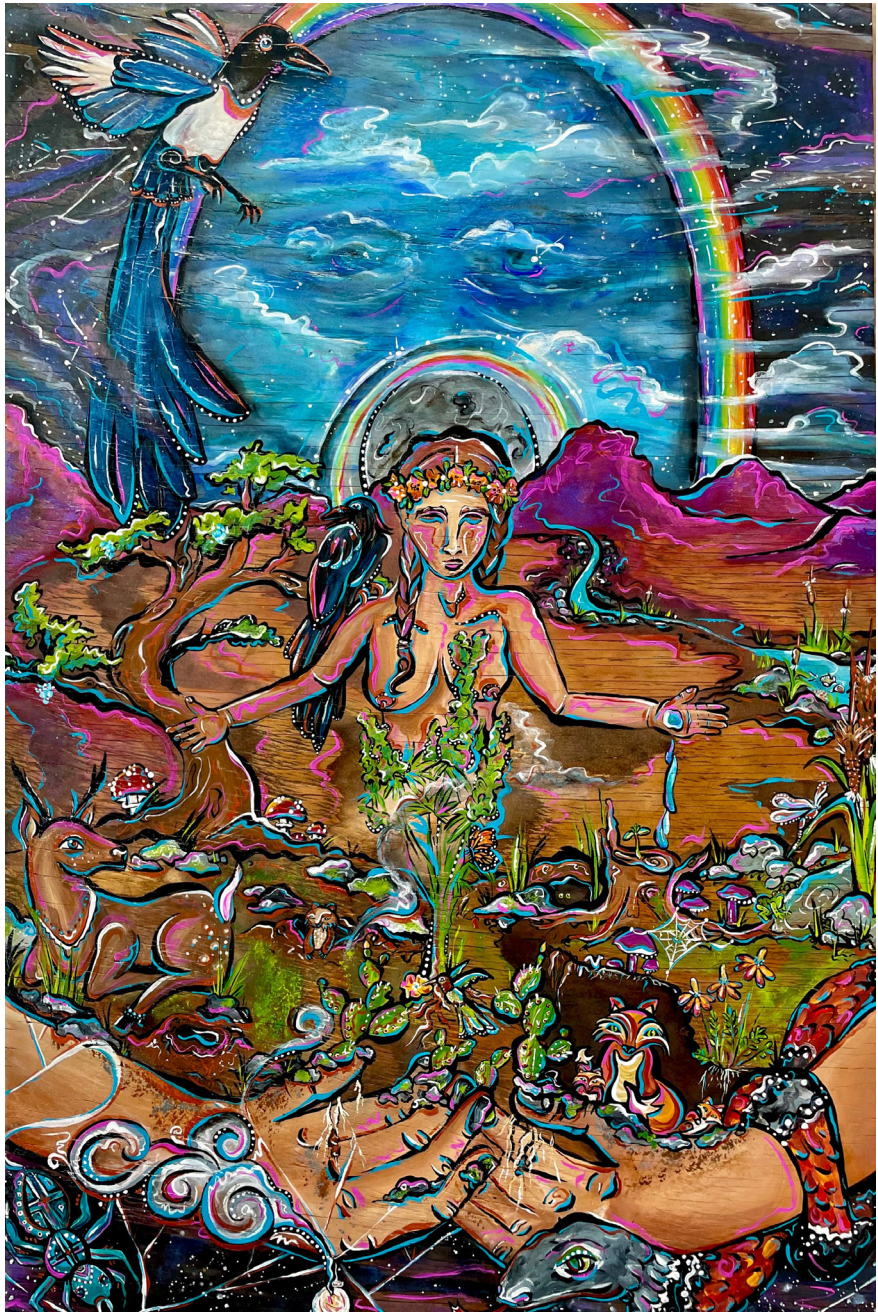


Can I Grow?
Virginia Ann Kovach

FORTIFY

by RAD

Four to five, what a magical time to be alive, growing, expanding, and embodying the essence of nurturance. The golden hours of seasonal cycles, enhancing, adding value, to be loved up and appreciated by microscopic beings. Believing is seeing, the realization of dreams, unknown outcomes, arriving with grace, patience and spontaneity. Seeping down, penetrating, and replenishing, leading to further development, the internal work. Revelatory resources, spurring new ideas, binding to the interdependent mycelia, to be connected through vast networks of super natural sinew. Weaving with worms, a dynamic exchange of energies, transported through portals of passionate protection, establishing the edges of boundaries, obstacles and barriers revealed, constant practice of surrender and acceptance. Carrying forth the revelations of relationships, learning and decolonizing, pairing words with actions, a decadent flight of trust, honesty, and integrity. To be strengthened, to live wholly, love in community, aware and committed to accountability, to relinquish the powers of privilege, letting the light shine in. Flooded with feelings, emotions rising to the surface, as tides comb the brain's beaches, rescaping the mental topographies. Going over the tracks, smoothing out grated grooves, showing up, being present with what is, and discarding that which isn't currently serving. To find support in simplicity, allowing curiosity to step forward, holding the guide rope, to gain insights and knowledge of signs and signals from the Queerverse. Calling in clarity, refinement of desires, many moons of mystic musings, stirred up by eclipses and retrogrades, abundance incarnate. Righteous rage, cracking open the anger to heal and reveal. Along the way finding moments of calm and solid solitude. Purposeful isolation for pensive moments of reflection, to build on foundations of equity and belonging. Finding and discovering, worthwhile explorations of patterns, emerging as collections of melodies, a song book of the sirens that beckon and lure, unveiled needs of the process, the careful participation in pleasure, to flow and glow.



Sometimes I See Great Grandma's Face in the Skies Over Gallup

Anna Marie Ryan

Spring



Spring Spell
by Claire Jussel

it is happening again this dance this giddy air this sun

sap flowing out from every old wound this is no metaphor but sweet water stored to protect

from freeze running up root under bark, streaming bounty flow too much to be contained

spilling from every fissure light sweet humming bird food lick bark everything is reading

now tenor before budding mud rise the flocking of so many geese across the sky

the returning the refrain of what has never left us the plant the light the birdsong rising

into its season this is no conjuring but time turning behind the eyelids of the earth

again again this is no summoning but greeting we happy magpies

shine-drawn squawking feather ruffling shoulder rubbing, drunk on the warm after our session of quiet

this is no returning but bringing together a gathering to the fulcrum of breathing of feeding

of beating heart we forget how the year loops and loops upon itself orbit spun

radiant bright before brash the quickening

the quaking of muscle reawakening delirium delight

right here right here



...the country's economy.
Up America Again." Under
most current social distance
could be lifted within four
ultimately, he won't make it
sions. He told governors to
own shots" in determining
proper, honest, school
every day America in their
means, how states could
May 1, or even earlier if it
But public health experts
country should wait until
using jobs are working
than Mr. Trump's plan
disastrous resurgence

...room.
Mr. Stephanopoulos, 57,
show, said that he was taking care
himself. "I'm definitely being careful in
ing down and wearing gloves," he said. "I
have not been wearing a mask."
Ms. Wentworth ended her video by say-
ing, "The way, stay home."
...sister Carrie Doyle, an author who
lives in New York City and East Hampton,
saw Mr. Stephanopoulos at
White's Apothecary about a week ago. The
pharmacy is offering free delivery, and has
tried customers to take advantage of the
service to protect the health of staff and
customers who need to come in contact with
pharmacies.
...was dismayed that he saw the clip
pick up in the group," Ms. Doyle said. "I
thought it wasn't very thoughtful to be out-
ing about, especially since the other
customers in the pharmacy were older."
When she put the video on her
tration to her

...following guidelines
Disease Control
into the pharmacy
his wife first
"I was
ing. I never
her, I was
ism"
...is a g
ump and
...we desig
...reported
...to New
urgent care facility in Bridgehampt
...Mr. Trump has pe
...the impo
home. "Let's do everything
...Then he took a walk on the
...approach," she said in a video later that he lea
...And on Easter, Chris Coo
...The CNN show "Cuom
made headlines for
baseament about
had a very

...an 18
...as self-monit
...ature, and I nev
...ptoms," Mr. St
...and gloves in Whit
...The next day, he said, he decided to tra
...get tested because he was preparing
...turn to work. He was able to get test
...carry in a mask."
...I was nowhere
...st
...st

...Exit Will Not Be Sto
...the coronavirus crisis.
Exit procedures back
territory. Talks negoti

spring
STARTS
THE
moment you
Finally
REMEMBER

Luxury is
your own

backyard

...for America's new states without a
...There is a Whole
...is from Ms
...in
...in-minded people
...Wal-
...pool
...es clipping from 1933.
...ted: "The power of
levy what are in ef-
...face. It may some-
...lently, but, never-
...power subject to no
...which is the antithesis
...n."
...Arnold, President
...assistant attor-
...charge of trust, during an
...sion much like the one the
...rencing) today.
...F.D.R. moment, and as far
...to F.D.R.," Ms. Mitchell
...aid.
...for the last crisis, the 2008 crash,
...for a time that a better, more equi-
...right result. Reforms were
...were changed — but few of
...quished. While the



...follow the Rules'
baseament about
had a very
...aren't ex
...these day
...commerce
...retail sal
...er spendi
...ar stores, and
...fell 8.7 percent
...the biggest and fa
...ly three decades that
...been recorded. And it
...g: Retail jobs make up
...economy, so if peopl
...others won't get pay
...the cycle continues.

Checks?
...ew weeks
...re awaited
...on the Tr
...\$1,200 p
...\$500 per
...has hit s
...ipients n
...Others are
...ple with overdra
...ants had their stur
...ed by their bank
...ically legal but de
...Americans putting
...mediate reasons li
...makers called on
...processes, a
...But the
...ous prob
...at mo

Finally, Remember
Virginia Ann Kovach

Ephemeral Springtime

by Marit

“This is really why I made my daughters learn to garden - so they would always have a mother to love them, long after I am gone.”

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

As a kid, the excitement of spring came when the first seed catalog arrived during the dead of winter. I spent hours at the kitchen table pouring over the heirloom varieties offered by Seed Savers Exchange, debating which new varieties to try and which were good enough to plant again.

As the days started to inch longer and little vegetable seedlings would start emerging in our basement window, I could feel spring right around the corner. Our yard came alive with flowers, from tulips to irises, always a surprise exactly where the bulbs would pop up. These warm, sunny spring days were when my mom first started teaching me how to feed myself from the land. Afternoons would be spent picking dandelion leaves to eat for dinner and then laying on our backs to watch the clouds roll by. We would sit under trees meticulously picking cups of violet wildflowers to make into jam in the kitchen. This beautifully colored spring treat was how she first taught me to preserve the current bounty for the future.

The next sign of spring was when we took to the woods surrounding our house in search of elusive morel mushrooms. She ensured I quickly learned how to identify them and recognize the areas where they tend to grow. Yet, there is something about morels that is hard to quantify. Some years, we would return with an onion sack full of them and a grin on my face. Other years just a few to fry up, each member of the family getting just a couple bites to savor. A true gift from nature, not to be commodified, simply enjoyed.

As the days warmed, the garden would start to come alive—specifically everyone’s favorite spring vegetable: asparagus. In the early spring days, I would eagerly go and check on the asparagus patch, seeing if I could spot any small crowns poking out of the soil. In those lucky years when we had plenty of morels to go around, my mom and I harvested a big bundle of asparagus to make my favorite spring dish: asparagus and morel risotto. The first meal of the season that featured fresh food from the land we called

home.

In 2019, my mom passed away from cancer. These memories mean more to me now than I ever thought possible. The biggest gift she ever gave me was instilling a deeply seeded love for this Earth. Now at 24 years old, she would be proud of me working on an organic vegetable farm and using the skills she taught me. Most springs, my dad and I still go out foraging for morel mushrooms, and I always enjoy heaps of asparagus risotto. This coming spring, I plan to spend a few hours in the sun picking wild violets.



Nettles

by Lucy Srour

Nobody loves life like my dad loves life. “If I were any happier there’d be two of me!” - his most worn out one liner. As the eldest daughter in a home with no sons, I was raised the son under this man and his palpable fervor for life. The daughter-son meant embodying the role of the son. Read: riding dirt bikes, playing sports, listening to lectures on the difference between a 3 stroke and 4 stroke engine. Blah, blah, you get the picture. Dude stuff.

Nettles.

This is a story about nettles.

Not my dad.

Growing up the daughter-son, I trailed behind my dad as he squeezed everything from the lemons life had to offer. (Forget lemonade, he has been making a lemon meringue pie for years!) He loves to run, and as soon as his daughter-son was about eight, the two of us could be found galavanting along a ridge that ran parallel to the Potomac River. Despite the fact that, or more accurately in spite of the fact that, there is a maintained path that runs right along the Potomac River, we went the feral route, choosing to run through the woods less trafficked by humans, teeming with overgrowth. The green understory was thick like pudding in the fertile months of the year.

Nettles.

This is a story about nettles.

And my dad.

At that point in the year, when the forsythias’ yellow was titillating and the redbuds were trying to keep up, an added agent of anarchy would shroud our off-road path: stinging nettles. One step into their green community and they would remind us who was really in charge. It felt as though tiny knives were slashing at my legs, instinctively I would reach down to wipe away the blood that was never there. Once free from their grasp, the pain would subside, but a dull irritation and redness lingered to remind us of the nettles’

vigor. My dad triumphantly claimed to love it, grinning from ear to ear and asserting “I feel so alive!” I guess he loves to feel, anything or everything, that much.

Nettles.

This is a story about nettles.

And my dad.

Years later, while working as a professional cook at an institution of a Boston restaurant, I was stunned to discover people can and do eat this hardy little leaf. Good for your tummy, bad for your skin. The embarrassment of my ignorance burned my cheeks red when the chef triumphantly walked in with a garbage bag full of nettles, and I blurted out “YOU CAN EAT THOSE??” Yes. Apparently, if you cook them the stinging goes away (any heat source will dissolve their sting) leaving behind a versatile green that tastes like a well-seasoned spinach.

My favorite part is the savory broth produced when nettles are blanched or boiled, like miso soup or chicken broth. At this restaurant, the nettles were blanched, blitzed, and mixed with a mild melty Turkish cheese. Then they were stuffed into a flaky phyllo like pastry dough to be seared then served with a slathering of a tomato brown butter sauce. I work at a different restaurant now, but you will find nettles on our menu too, this time in the shape of a green pine nut pesto. A pesto of dreams. At the end of a long night, feeling ravenous, embodying the feral tendencies imprinted in me, I find myself dipping anything - bread, seared parsnips, small nibbles of meat, eggs - anything into what remains of the pint of this pesto.

Nettles

This is a story about nettles.

And my dad.

And pawpaws.

On those same trails where the nettles took our legs to combat, my dad and my mom discovered the pawpaw plant. They too were on a run when a saccharine smell formed a cloud around their heads, distinctively sugary, like

a honeysuckle on a dopamine kick. Lying on the ground in front of them was a fruit the shape of a small mango with lime green skin speckled with dark brown bruises and mustard yellow flesh oozing out the split on the side. Like animals following an instinct, they brought it home to eat. Our neighbor, who grew up in Hong Kong, was the one who identified it for us as a pawpaw. The fruit is custardy and the flavor is more bitter than its sweet aroma. When ripe, the bloated fruit is too much for the thin tree trunk to handle and they fall right onto the ground. Best eaten right away, slice them down the middle and suck the flesh off the pitch black seeds.

Many years later, while working at a specialty grocery store, our produce manager strutted in with pawpaws to be sold. A commodity, these little guys go for a hefty price! As with the nettles, I found myself dumbfounded. No one except for my family bothered to try them along the Potomac River, but when sold alongside California dates and marcona almonds, the value of this delicate fruit can become part of a capitalist framework.

Nettles.

This is a story about nettles.

And about pawpaws.

And my family.

My parents' anniversary is on Earth Day. They were married many years after the first Earth Day, but, as with discovering the pawpaw and nettles, this shared date is a mere coincidence. Pure chance, just the way of the universe. Growing up we ignored the nettles because they hurt, and we ate the pawpaws because they were inviting. My parents showed me how to listen to nature and the changing of the seasons. It seems like restaurants are starting to listen, too. Let my parents serve as role models; we should listen with generosity and instinct. We should listen in symbiosis with nature, not to prove something. Let the sting of the nettles remind us of the true hierarchy of the earth.

Spring Rains

by Geneva Toland

Spring rains bring the waterfalls
And the new leaves
And the wildflowers

Spring rains bring the robins home
And the green grass
And the rushing rivers

Can you feel it all coming back to life?
Can you feel it all coming back to life?

Can you feel yourself coming back to life?
Can you feel yourself coming back to life?



Woodland Phlox Promises Healing

by Danielle Wirth

We all welcome signs of Spring. Woodland phlox are popping up throughout the ephemeral layer of the oak savanna, along with Dutchman’s breeches, false rue anemone, spring beauty, bloodroot, trout lily, Virginia bluebells, violets, sweet cicely and the early hepatica.

This particular flower clump is at the edge of a cataclysmic event horizon. The 2020 derecho took many of our large trees, and a giant green ash was ripped out of the ground, creating a huge hole on this hillside. Nature tolerates few vacuums, so plants, native and invasive, began to repopulate the exposed soil. Just this year, delicately scented phlox joined the pioneers to recover the hillside. What a welcome surprise, and the promise of healing. Unbidden, but most welcome. We need these blooms to feed the female bumble bees who are beginning to build their colonies for 2024. The woodland phlox is feeding the bumbles and our souls.



Dandelion

by Virginia Ann Kovach

We are pulling up roots of weeds, and you are everywhere. Your roots are thick, and they snap easily, leaving open laticifers bleeding milky white latex as if in defiance of our aggression. Your roots go deep, and you can grow from just a fraction of them.

But I have to say, when I do pull you up all the way, and I do hear that satisfying *pop* and my neighbor says, “Oooh, I’ll take that! I’ll roast it to make coffee” I must say that does feel good.

But here I am trying to rid you from my garden. You, old friend, what did you ever do to me?

To me, you are childhood. You were the sappy stem tucked behind my 8-year-old ear. Small and happy, in everyone’s way, running everywhere without a care. You give all the sunshine back that you soak up.

You are in the family Asteraceae with aster, daisies, chrysanthemums, and sunflowers. You all share a certain kind of humility, a lack of pretension, and an unfettered joy.

Your blossom is fuzzy but hardy, like a mussed-up head of Muppet hair. When I pick you, I smell something sharp. If my eyes were closed today in the middle of winter and your scent was suddenly in my nostrils, I would know you as summer before recognizing you as you.

My friend Sarah once put your leaves in a salad and gave some to me. I noticed your taste was as sharp as your scent. That was one of many depression summers, one of many summers with a low-paying job and a dim vision of my future. Sarah let me live with her rent-free.

Your sunshine was free to me too.

Creation Inside Us

by Katie Spring

Kindling sets flames to lick
the firebox
a cast iron skillet
takes the heat,
holds it in its open face,
and I crack the egg.

Just yesterday I threw compost
out to the chickens,
and the matted roots
of harvested pea shoots,
green stems sticking up
like stubble.

Somehow the earth
is thawing—melting
snow sets rivers running
through the field
and the chickens peck
emerging worms in the barnyard.

We all have creation
inside us

The chickens, they take worms and compost,
turn it into muscle and eggs.
Me, I take these deep golden
yolks, thick and smooth, into my mouth
I turn them into muscle and milk
to feed my babe
and he, too grows:

supple skin stretches
over elongating bones
teeth cut through gums
even his voice
rises and shifts—
an audible, intangible
creation.

He does not know yet
of spring
how thin blades of grass cut
through winter's kill
how green spreads like a wave
from the valley up this hillside,
how the lone call of the raven
is replaced by chickadees, robins, hermit thrush, and
the reverberating howl of the snipe.

He knows of the barnyard,
of chickens and eggs,
of warm milk.
He knows of cool mornings,
hot stoves.

And what do I know of creation?
Only that I cannot explain it,
though morning sun streams
through the window,
though steam rises slowly from my tea
though even in stillness,
energy moves, pushing us into
transformation

A Heartfelt Talk

By Marta Morales

Dearest Mother,

The day to honor mothers is approaching. Many seasons came and left, locking lasting memories in my heart. You are in my thoughts; when I hang the laundry outside, make *chilaquiles* for the grandchildren, or when I prepare your favorite dishes.

When I felt defeated, you gave me courage and fortitude. Your words were calming and powerful. You said *Hazte fuerte!** When I saw you endure hardships, I also learned how to be strong and resilient.

You taught me how to love my children. Our border experience in Tijuana was a deprivation few can endure. Money and food were scarce. You often gave up your food for our sake. I learned how much you loved us.

I deeply appreciate the sacrifices you made raising our large family. You left the house making the sign of the cross, worked eight hours at the factory, and came home to make dinner. I learned that nothing worthwhile can be achieved without sacrifice.

I cannot think of anyone with more courage and compassion. How I wish I could have shared my thoughts with you before we departed. You remain my inspiration.

Your daughter who loves you dearly,

Marta



*Be strong!

How to Listen

by Corrine Schwarting

I.

I watch the clock – the same one
gifted to me by my grandmother.
Bird songs mark the hour.
A Northern Cardinal at 9;
I rise with the Morning Dove at 7.

Mines placed in the same spot as hers.
Above the kitchen sink, greeting
me from sleep and keeping watch as
We dance chop dance chop
through the kitchen.

This passing of time
used to send me down
the kitchen sink.

Always too much to do,
never enough time.
How can we sing at an hour like this?

II.

somewhere along the line
a pair of binoculars found home
by my front door.

Neighborhood strolls,
hikes by the creek,
a hop skip jump to Nebraska for
The Sandhill Crane Migration.

800,000 birds, the biggest in the last
20 some years.

And whether its out of
ego or whimsy or
answering a once-known language,

Sometimes I pretend
the birds are singing to me.

And I'm beginning to sing along.

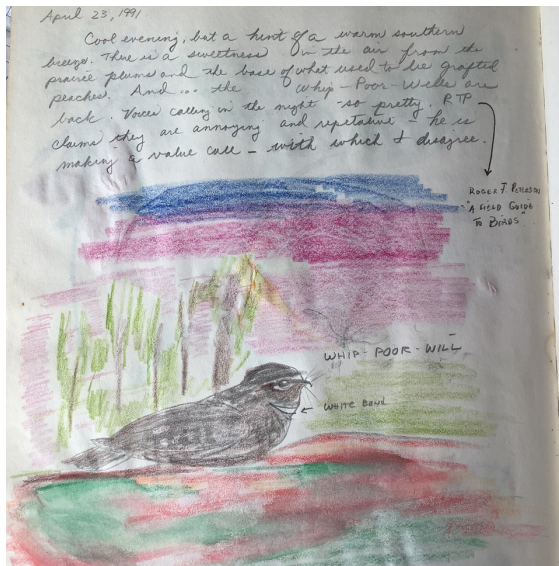


Whip-Poor-Will Returns

by Danielle Wirth

More than thirty years ago, whip-poor-will calls rolled through our little creek valley. They would sing most of the night, even standing on the edges of our log cabin to throw their voices out into the valley. Then, twenty years ago, they went silent. My son and I have always remembered their calls.

Recently, I found an old sketch from a field journal dated April 23, 1991.



Wow - long time ago - a lifetime almost.

The voices of the whip-poor-wills were missing for 33 years, but this April 29th, I heard them again.

A Dispatch from Spring

by Denise O'Brien

The gardening season may have finally arrived. The rain in Iowa has been quenching the thirst of our parched, droughty soils and now it's time to dry out. Perhaps you have gotten a jump start and planted your spinach, lettuce, broccoli and other cool weather vegetables in between showers and they are now emerging. It's hard to hold back when the weather is hot, sunny and dry for several days, but then it turns cool and moist again and our efforts are halted once more. Many of you have been out foraging for mushrooms, harvesting asparagus, and making all sorts of goodies with rhubarb. More daring folks put on a long sleeved shirt and harvest nettles for teas and soups. Even with its erratic behavior this has been a good spring so far. It seems like many years we jump from winter to summer and wonder what happened to the spring. According to the Farmer's Almanac, much of the country will experience a wet, moist and hot summer.

Four years ago, I transitioned from growing food for families to establishing a greenhouse business for garden plants. I am grateful that I have a warm place to work in during February and March. Planting, watering and fertilizing seedlings, just plain having my hands in soil, keeps me mentally and physically healthy (some may wonder about that statement). My greenhouse skills were acquired years ago when I worked in a small local business that raised starter plants. I learned how to plant seeds, water in a timely manner and to love the seedlings as they grew into beautiful vegetables and flowers.

Science has proven that gardening is good for everyone's health. The sight of a beautiful hanging basket full of thrillers, spillers and fillers can take your breath away. Walking among flowers fills our nostrils with pleasant aromas that create a calming effect on our psyche. That is if we stop, look and breathe.

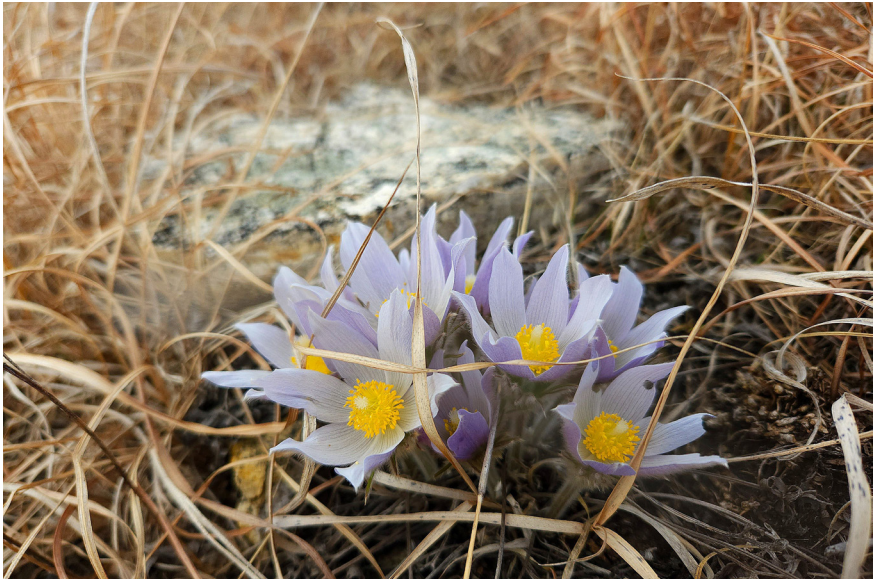
Then there are vegetables. Some gardeners I know have an annual rivalry about who gets their potatoes in first. The ritual of planting on Good Friday is exactly that, a ritual. The soil was much too cold on March 29th this year,

those poor little pieces of potatoes shivered waiting for warmer days to emerge.

Beauty and sustenance are two benefits of spring, whether it is what Nature provides in the form of wild flowers and medicinal plants or what humans add to the landscape.

When we emerge from the cold, long nights of winter, our eyes feast on the beauty of the land.

Sadly, prairie forbs and grasses have become nearly extinct due to the domination of the industrial agri-business model. Eighty per cent of Iowa was once covered by prairie, the foundation of our incredibly rich soil. Today there is 0.1%. Restoring prairie is a must in order to mitigate climate change. Iowa has the right environment to grow corn, but in order to deal with climate change and plant diversity, we must rebuild the prairie and re-wild the land for future generations.



The Gathering Light

by Katie Spring

Sheep no longer wake us at night
with the possibility of birth or death.
This spring it is birdsong that trills the alarm,
pronouncing dawn and sun and the prospect
of thaw, of swelling rivers and tunneling worms.
Tools have taken over the sheep barn
where lambs once fell into the world
sticky and red, fumbling on knobby knees to the udder.
I can almost smell them, lanolin thick fleece flecked with hay,
though it's been a year, and tractor fuel faintly wafts through the air.

Not all life is born in spring, but we don't say this.
We push away the memory of a night we slept too long,
when labor stalled and horn buds caught at the opening—
no one tells us that birth is full of suffering, but shepherds
learn from a ewe's wailing song of loss.

New life heals lost life; that ewe gave birth the following spring
to a healthy set of twins, but I hung up my shepherd's cane, and
call myself a gardener now, enamored still with birth: the softening
seed shell, the unfurling sprout, the push through soil and stretch toward
sun.

Struggle hasn't left, but look how spring emboldens us:
green buds explode across hillsides, water flows in valleys,
the gathering light holds us
as we are born into a new season.



Ephemeral

Lyrics and music by Emma Kieran Schaefer

Listen here: emmakieran.bandcamp.com/track/ephemeral

Like the springtime flowers growing in the forest
Under the Iowa sun
For a few weeks the flowers bloom so freely
Till the canopy covers the light and they're done

Like a summer thunder 'cross the prairie
Under the Iowa rain
There's something 'bout the way the storm's rolling away
Leaves an echo in my bones, a longing in my veins

Ephemeral, through growth and decay there's always a way
Ephemeral, will we want this moment back one day

Like autumn breezes blow through oak savanna
Under the Iowa sky
The goldenrods hold onto the last bit of sunshine
But the colors will fade as geese start to fly

Like swans sleeping on frozen river
Under the Iowa moon
One night it's full and the next it is already waning
Tell me why is it always leaving too soon

Ephemeral, what would you say if you just had today
Ephemeral, will we want this moment back one day
God I'll want this moment back one day

Like the springtime flowers growing in the forest
Under the Iowa sun
For a few weeks the flowers bloom so freely
Till the canopy covers the light and they're done

Summer



Rebirth

by Tara Labovich

an entire life can be contained
 in a single season. in that time
i could relearn to walk. find a first
 word & white-knuckle grip it
til the whole day resonates
 with that single sound, like a chord struck
underfoot, that purrs underground.
 in three months i could learn to sail,
knit the blade of the boat
 through the water & know ease.
or i could give into collapse: never leave
 the sinking couch, watch the oak across
the street turn to mulch & feel her absence
 in my chest like a rib that's been stolen
in my sleep. i could decide to live.
 i could hold joy, baby, i swaddle it
like a fluttering fragile thing in my bra,
 tucked between my breasts. i could paint
myself sole to scalp in baby blue & hope the sky
 takes me for her own. i can't promise
a season: no one can promise anyone time.
 but i could start again.
i could do it if i wanted.

Lilac Syrup

by Amie Adams

Making lilac syrup is one of my favorite ways to celebrate the oncoming of summer. Watch for lilacs blooming when spring rains bring green grass, dandelions, violets, and maple leaves.

1. Harvest lilac blossoms when the flowers are in full bloom, with no signs of decay. After a rain or on a cool evening is recommended. Snip clusters of blossoms and be sure not to take too many from a single bush. Take care to only harvest flowers from bushes that are free of chemicals and pesticides.
2. Carefully pluck each flower from the stems. Take care to keep out the twigs, leaves, and green bits. Fill a dish or jar with the flowers and cover them with cool water. Leave to soak overnight in a cool place.
3. Strain out the flowers. Combine the lilac-infused water with an equal amount of sugar in a saucepan. Add a few drops (or capfuls) of lemon juice to bring out a pale lavender color in the mixture.
4. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil for 5 minutes.
5. Remove from heat and let stand for 10 minutes. You now have a simple syrup (it will have a consistency close to water).
6. Store in clean jars and keep refrigerated. Lilac simple syrup should last about two weeks in the refrigerator and can be frozen for up to a year.

Enjoy your lilac syrup as a flavoring for lemonade, tea, or a cocktail.



Kindred Spirits

by Virginia Ann Kovach

Olivia told me she
watched a video
of fast-motion blooming
flowers and it made her
weep because flowers
are sex and they're
beautiful, so intimacy
can be beautiful, too,
for her, despite her trauma

Laurie told me farm stories:
growing up on a practical
Iowa farm with soybeans
and a vegetable garden,
but flowers weren't practical
in her parents' minds,
but her grandma planted
lilacs nearby and they bloomed
through Laurie's
childhood anyway

Ayanna told me to
put her name in my
book while we
stripped roses at work
"It means beautiful
flower," she told me

I told my mom I couldn't
paint flowers — how
could I count all those petals?
But she shook her head,
told me that isn't how it works
Instead, she said, "just squint"

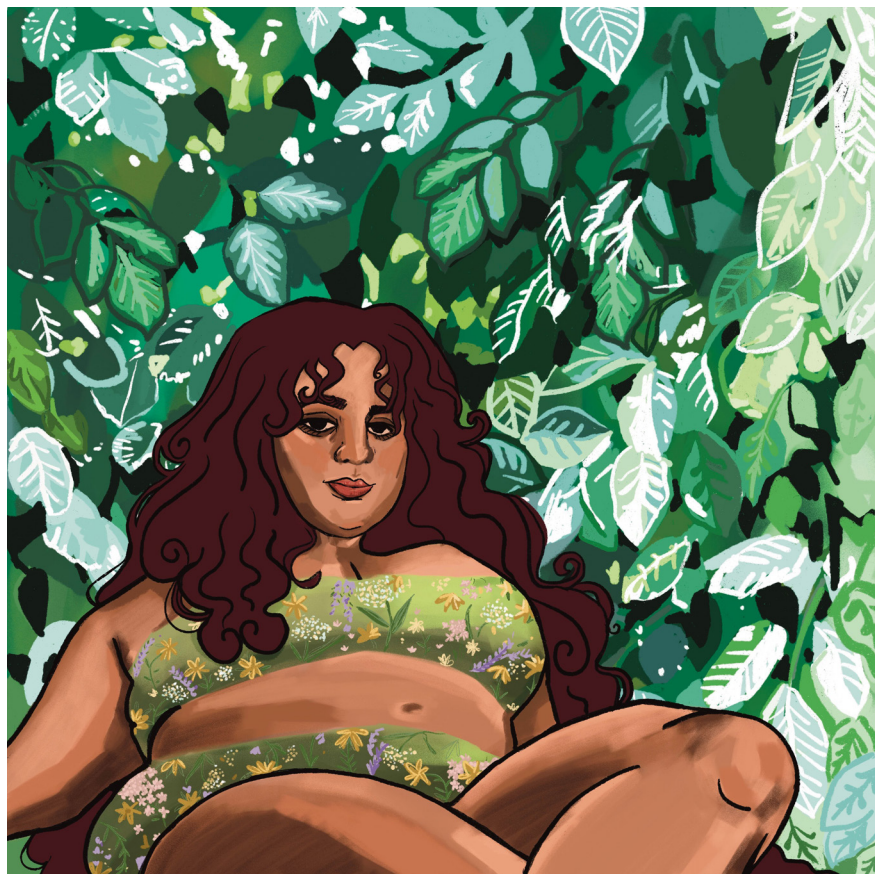


Summer Solstice

by Claire Jussel

sun drips into the mulberry we eat
beneath, berry raining
bruise black fruit into open beak
mouths, smearing us—skin, grass, tablecloth—all
in stain, in beckoning
to mess, to lick, to reach palms up for abundance,
to the warm filling up planted rows, our bellies,
fireflies glowing up from poppies and rosemary.
We dizzy on the twirling
Earth—fire warm, air thick, dove coo
on our full ears, our tart lips, elbows linked
turning to dance a new direction. The longest
day haze blue dissolves into mulberry dark sky light
and sweet and bursting on our tongues.





Rooted Bonds: The Foundations of Building a Conscious and Sustainable Relationship with the Land

by Emmaly Renshaw

My youngest child learned to ride last summer. I watched her front bike wheel wobble on the loose gravel as she sought to find that elusive balance that only comes with time and tumbles. On our return route, she stopped abruptly and gazed into the shadows and underbrush of a one-track dirt trail. With wild eyes of curiosity, she asked, “Where does this lead?” I understood she didn’t have the control to attempt even a green-level mountain bike one-track trail, but I also witnessed that look of wonderment and knew she was at the age to create a bond with the land that would last decades. Against better judgment, we embarked on a prolonged journey that day, sideswiping trees and spilling into patches of poison ivy lining the narrow trail that wound through the liminal space between field and river. Upon our return home, as I ferociously scrubbed the poisonous invasive oils off her arms and legs, considering I had most likely ruined any desire to try again, she looked at me with a huge grin and asked, “Does it always feel like this?”

Within weeks, this kid was flying through the woods and prairies, both bike and body scratched and battered, bellowing in her young voice, trying to find a vocabulary not yet formed to describe how she felt away from the built environment. This marked the summer when she breathed in the Iowa soil, and the land was no longer an object but a companion.

Think of your earliest memory of the land when you felt part of it and not on top of it. I was six. As a child, our midwest farm became my playground for exploring solo well before I turned double digits. In the days squeezed between pre-tech sovereignty and the grasp of the digital era, like most kids in the 80s, I experienced unrestrained freedom to roam. My feet led me through deep glens with caves, bubbling streams, and thick timbers sheltering Northeast Iowa’s sacred algific talus slopes. The lay of the land was engrained in my memory by following narrow deer trails that wound through the otherwise impenetrable thickets of multiflora rose. Deep in the ravines, in the slivers of land that Iowa commercial agriculture did not desecrate, stood the century oaks, saved only by terrain too raw to plow. Here, beneath their sprawling limbs, my young self felt a confidence and

awe found nowhere else. The soil soaked into my veins, flooding my heart with a sense of wonder and purpose. No matter where my feet led me, I was never lost.

“To those devoid of imagination, a blank place on the map is a useless waste; to others, the most valuable part.” -Aldo Leopold,
A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There

These are the sacred liminal spaces in Iowa, the parts left over, deemed valueless because the plow could not touch them. They account for a mere 3% of our landscape. While highly degraded, these narrow strips between fields and rivers, steep ravines, and undrained wetlands hold our biodiversity and whisper what Iowa once was and what it can be again.

Iowa is the most altered landscape in the world. 97% of our land is unrecognizable from its pre-white settlement state; 91% has been plowed, tiled, deforested, and grazed to a point that could soon be beyond repair. 6% of our land is sodded and paved. It is the ultimate story of taming and conquering, manipulating without considering the consequences.

Today, our waterways and lakes are grossly impaired. We no longer know to what extent because water quality testing funding has been cut at the state level. Ten years into the Nutrient Reduction Strategy, there is no measurable progress in reducing nitrates. Throughout our agrarian courtship with the land, the Midwest has lost 57 billion metric tons of topsoil through tillage. Iowa's black fertile soils are rare and viewed as a commodity for today, not for its future nourishment value.

“We abuse land because we see it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community we belong to, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” - Aldo Leopold

The story of how we got here is complex, woven through cold-war policy, ingenuity in the form of mechanization, and the idea that prosperity equals excess. A bitter fight rages about who is at fault for our polluted rivers and eroding fields. Is it the politician? Is it the farmer? Is it the consumer? The responsibility rests on all of us. It's time to pause and ask each of us *what obligation I have to repair the land?* As a society, we have built a complex system

that is now difficult to change: layers of economics and industry devoted to less biodiversity and more homogeneity. We have shifted to believing that the only way is manicured landscapes of crisp rows, barren of anything else. It is a system that has produced affordable, secure food available for the masses, but the costs are well documented, and they are visual if you look. If we don't pivot, the damage will be irreparable.

The world is changing; we note it in our crop planning: frosts well into May, warm spells in February that threaten to force apple trees out of their slumber too early, extended droughts in the summer with record-high temperatures, the ground fissuring beneath our feet desperate for moisture. Climate change is no longer a story of melting ice caps far from view; we are watching it unfold in our home fields.

We have attempted to monetize healing, a carbon credit system so complex few can explain it. Conservation programs work as long as money flows through them to farmers. There is merit to subsidizing conservation practices; it is often the catalyst that allows farmers to better their practices. However, mending will only come once we seek an intimate relationship with the land, and this begins with each of us: farmer, consumer, politician. The first steps to healing are simple. When we find awe in our land, we care for it. There is a renaissance of small farmers in Iowa, creating farming philosophy and practices to heal the land. These producers focus on growing locally to nourish communities. Their practices invite biodiversity to return to the fields while creating a more resilient and sustainable food system. When producers own the land they farm and hope to hand it down through the generations, they are committed to conserving it. As growers, when we memorize the valleys of a field where the water flows naturally and the birds nest in the spring, we become aware of a system already operating that we can work alongside. When we can close our eyes and see every foot we plant, leaning into its characteristics and accepting its faults, we pivot from being an owner to a tender.

Great things come to pass by small and simple means. It is our obligation to take the fragments of land we have access to and build a relationship. We must learn how to be a partner with the land instead of a master. The responsibility lies with all of us to evaluate our relationship and act. Whether you farm or not, your actions are part of the sum. For farmers, take five acres of farmland to diversify and pilot a better practice. Visit the NRCS

office and see how you can widen field buffer strips to protect the water. On the urban front, let clover mingle with the manicured grass in the front yard while inviting the pollinators into vibrant albeit unruly beds. As a consumer, consider your budget and buy \$100 a week or \$10 a week from a local farm; every dollar supports this work. Increase water quality testing by joining the Nitrate Watch Community. As a politician, stand for what is needed and right before it is too late. Change begins with the individual. Small acts turn into flourishing relationships, and mending will commence as we wait for the giant cogs we have built over decades to slow and reverse to adhere to these new practices. May our liminal spaces broaden and become entangled with the fields as we remember how to connect with the land once again. So step outside and go into the nearest woods or field. Remember. Breathe. Connect. Act.



Perfect Memory
Zoë Fay-Stindt

SUELX ESTÁ VIVX

Bajo dex suelx

Activx

y

Tranquilx

Tan renacidx



Queridx tierra encantadorx,

Gracias por los muchos regalos que nos traes durante el año. Es un honor ver los ciclos de las estaciones, mientras manifiestas sobre la superficie lo que vive debajo. Sus capxs representan las necesidades de crecimiento profundas e intrincadas basadas en el lugar, que van desde los materiales orgánicos en la parte superior hasta el lecho rocoso. Sin su estratificación, no habría producción.

En el invierno, pareces estar dormidx; sin embargo, eso es solo lo que podemos ver superficialmente. En realidad, ¡estás llenx de vida debajo de la superficie! Eres saludablx y ricx en microbios. No labrar (voltrear/rotar) suelx en realidad puede aumentar la biodiversidad. Al no mezclar las capas, los horizontes (capas de suelo) pueden mantener mejor los nutrientes, la humedad y la fertilidad.

En la primavera, renaces de nuevx, mientras las semillas dormidas son despertadas por el sol que te calienta, tierra dulcx, y cobran vida de una manera mágica. Con los años, te conviertes en unx banx de semillas de plantas. Eres unx ecosistemx vivx, renaciendx las plantas anuales de años anteriores. Sus ciclxs de vida pueden ser anuales, pero su presencia en el sistema se vuelve perenne. Las plantas anuales se siembran por sí mismas y se almacenan dentro de ti, cada temporada, y se ofrecen como voluntarias para crecer de nuevo.

Estoy muy agradecida por el sol, el aire, el agua, los minerales y la materia orgánica que se unen para dar forma a tu hermosx cuerpo. Me recuerdas que el descanso es un componente esencial del ciclo de vida sostenible. Mis intenciones son nutrirte y reponerte, edificándote con el tiempo con amor, aprecio, compasión y afecto.

Apasionadxmente,

Agricultor RAD

SOIL IS ALIVE

Deep beneath the earth
Alive
Active
In silence
Awakened rebirth



Dear enchanting soil,

Thank you for the many gifts you bring us during the year. It is an honor to see the cycles of the seasons as you manifest above the surface that which lives below. Your layers represent the profound and intricate place-based necessities for growth, ranging from organic materials on the top all the way down to the bedrock. Without your stratification, there would be no production.

In the winter, you appear to be dormant; however, that is only what we can see superficially. In actuality, you are teeming with life below the surface! You are healthy and rich with microbes. Not tilling (turning/rotating) the soil can actually increase biodiversity. By not mixing up the layers, the horizons (layers of soil) are better able to maintain nutrients, moisture and fertility.

In the spring, you are reborn again, as the sleepy seeds are awakened by the sun warming you up, sweet soil, and come alive in a magical way. Over the years, you become a seed bank of plants. You are a living ecosystem, rebirthing the annual plants from previous years. Their life cycles may be annual, but their presence in the system becomes perennial. The annual plants self-seed and are stored within you, each season, volunteering to grow again.

I am so grateful for the sun, air, water, minerals and organic matter that come together to shape your gorgeous body. You remind me that rest is an essential component of the sustainable life cycle. My intentions are to nurture and replenish you, building you up over time with love, appreciation, compassion, and affection.

Passionately,
Farmer RAD

Creating Change, Where to Start?

by Angie Carter, Patti Naylor, & Ahna Kruzic

WFAN members are doers and changemakers. Often, we see the outcomes or ends of this work – the preserved prairie, the progressive candidate winning the city council seat – or the disappointments when our campaigns don't succeed. But how does this change-work begin? What can we do in our own communities to identify shared values among diverse people, build connections, and create change?

There are practical strategies and tools we can use to guide this work. To this end, we facilitated an organizing workshop at WFAN's conference last fall. The workshop was part of WFAN's broader Plate to Politics program, engaging and supporting women and non-binary folks in creating change in the rural communities and within the local food and agricultural systems where they live, be it by running for the local school board or the creation of a community meal program. Looking across the room, we each recognized a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience among the attendees who already have done so much to lead and inspire social change. To support WFAN members' continued leadership and organizing in their communities, we focused specifically on the importance of power mapping.

Power mapping is a participatory process-based tool that organizers can use to guide the planning of their campaigns. By identifying how power is working within a community, organizers develop better-targeted strategies for organizing campaigns and creating change. Various online resources provide more information and templates for power mapping. For example, the Union of Concerned Scientists' "Power Mapping Your Way to Success" or the Commons Social Change Library's "Power Mapping and Analysis" are easy-to-use and free to access.

First, let's define our terms:

- **Power** refers to the capacity to influence a situation or events, or to influence the behavior of others. As we all know, this can be used for good or bad. Power is not destined; rather, it is something that is created and can even be shared.
- **Organizing** is what we do when we work with others to try to build, share, and shift how power is working in a situation, time, or place.
- By organizing with others, we can create **collective power** through which we can accomplish more together than alone.

We discussed a real-life example of how county residents might be concerned about a proposed carbon storage pipeline that would threaten their public health and water. These residents might bring the issue to the attention of others through the creation of a letter writing campaign to the local newspapers to educate others about the risks and burdens the pipeline poses. Residents may also organize outreach to the landowners in the pipeline's path to dissuade them from signing pipeline easements and to offer support as the landowners deal with the pipeline company's harassment. Residents might reach out to environmental or faith-based groups who share concerns about climate change, ecological diversity or the pipeline's reliance on unsustainable chemical-intensive agriculture. They may also start a comment drive to increase the number of formal opposition comments submitted to the permit-granting authority, such as the Iowa Utilities Commission.

Each of these audiences is a "target;" each of these actions is an attempt to appeal to a specific target by appealing to the interests, needs, or goals they share with the pipeline's opponents. By organizing together on several fronts, through different strategies tailored to different audiences or targets, these county residents may create an issue where there was not one before; they may even gain some success in delaying or even stopping the project. A power map can help identify ways to tailor campaign organizing, as well as how to build solidarity across different interest groups. Of course, there will be some targets who do not share interests in opposing the pipeline; for example, perhaps the Iowa Utilities Commission members, who are appointed by the Governor, fear negative political pressure if they do not side with industry. It is important to map these targets, too, to understand if and how there might be means by which to pressure them to take a specific action or stand on the issue.

Power mapping "maps" these campaign targets into quadrants based upon how much power each has in creating change on an issue and how much agreement these actors or organizations have with you on the issue. In this example, those in agreement that these carbon storage pipelines need to be stopped would include the county resident concerned about the financial burden to the county should the pipeline leak, the landowners worried about their private property rights, and the environmentalists upset about the ecological threat. Each represents a target with high interest in stopping the pipeline, but none of these groups on their own have the power to shut the project down. The Iowa Utilities Commission, as the granting agency for the

permit needed to build the pipeline, does have the power to shut-down the pipeline by refusing to grant the permit.

Power mapping makes clearer whom to prioritize and with what type of an action or appeal, as well as how to reach out to these different targets. The power map becomes a tool to inform the planning of the different strategies and relationships to be used in organizing the larger campaign. This is especially important in grassroots organizing in which there are many people who are volunteering their time and talents, but capacity may be limited.

To remind us that none of us are alone as we continue this work for healthier, just, and equitable communities, we concluded our WFAN power mapping workshop with song, singing “Bread and Roses” together as co-founder Danielle Wirth played guitar. “Bread and Roses,” a movement song based upon James Oppenheim’s 1911 poem originally published in *The American Magazine*, has been sung by folk singers such as John Denver, Pete Seeger, and Judy Collins and embraced by women suffragists as well as striking miners, and garment and textile workers. *Yes, it is Bread we fight for—but we fight for Roses, too!* As part of the WFAN network, we are connected to one another’s struggles as well as joys as we work toward a more just world. The power map is a useful tool for organizing planning; we hope that your organizing includes the roses, too, through song and laughter with your friends and allies along the way.



Elderberry Sumac Jelly

by Sue Kuennen

Extracting Sumac Juice

1. Pick the small red berries off the sumac fruit heads until you have four cups. Pick through to remove any caterpillars. Place in strainer and shake over a wastebasket to remove any dirt or dried flower parts.
2. Place the berries in a stainless steel or enamel kettle, cover with water. While this is heating, use a potato masher or wooden pestle to pound and stir for 10 minutes or until water comes to a boil.
3. Remove immediately from the heat and filter through a 100% cotton, flour sack towel. I bundled the berries by drawing up the sides to form a large tea bag to excrete and filter the sumac juice.
4. Add water if necessary to make 2 quarts or 8 cups of sumac juice.

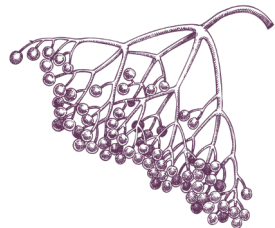
Extracting Elderberry Juice

1. Pick elderberries from the fruit cluster adding one cup of water to each quart of fruit, filling kettle (stainless steel or enamel) not over half full.
2. Simmer gently for 10 minutes, and then mash fruit with a potato masher or wooden pestle. Simmer for 10 more minutes.
3. Sieve through a colander to remove seeds, filter through 100% cotton, flour sack towel.

Each recipe has the same basic cooking instruction that follows.

Elderberry-Sumac Jelly

- 2 cups elderberry juice
- 2 cups sumac juice
- 1/3 cup pectin or one package Sure-Jell
- 5 cups sugar



Elderberry-Sumac-Lemon Jelly

1 cup elderberry juice

1 cup sumac juice

1 cup lemon balm tea (brew 1/4 cup fresh lemon balm leaves)

1 cup lemon verbena tea (brew 1/4 cup fresh lemon verbena leaves

in 1 cup boiling water 5 minutes.)

1/3 cup pectin or one package Sure-Jell

5 cups sugar

Cooking Instructions

1. Sterilize jars, bands and lids. Keep them in hot water until ready to fill and seal.
2. Prepare and measure fruit juice.
3. Measure sugar into separate bowl. Do not reduce sugar or use sugar substitutes. The exact amounts of sugar, fruit and pectin are necessary for a good set.
4. Stir in 1/3 cup fruit pectin or one box of SURE-Jell Fruit Pectin into fruit juice. Bring mixture to full rolling boil (one that does not stop when stirring) over high heat, stirring constantly.
5. Quickly add sugar to fruit juice mixture. Bring to full rolling boil and boil at least 3-5 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Skim off any foam.
6. Fill all jars quickly to 1/8-inch of tops. Wipe jar rims. Cover quickly with flat lids. Screw bands tightly. Invert jars 5-minutes, and then turn upright. After jars are cool, check seals by pressing middle of lid with finger. If lid springs up when finger is released, lid is not sealed. The USDA water bath method can also be utilized.



 FIELD NOTES

We Have the Solutions to this Crisis

If we hope

more vegetables and less meat;

people acting

at the grassroots level

addressing the climate crisis head-on



Yet here now, at this moment, at this place,
The world of the flower, the whole of
the world is blooming.



Our
World
Depends
on
BEING
PRESENT

Chicken Teachings I

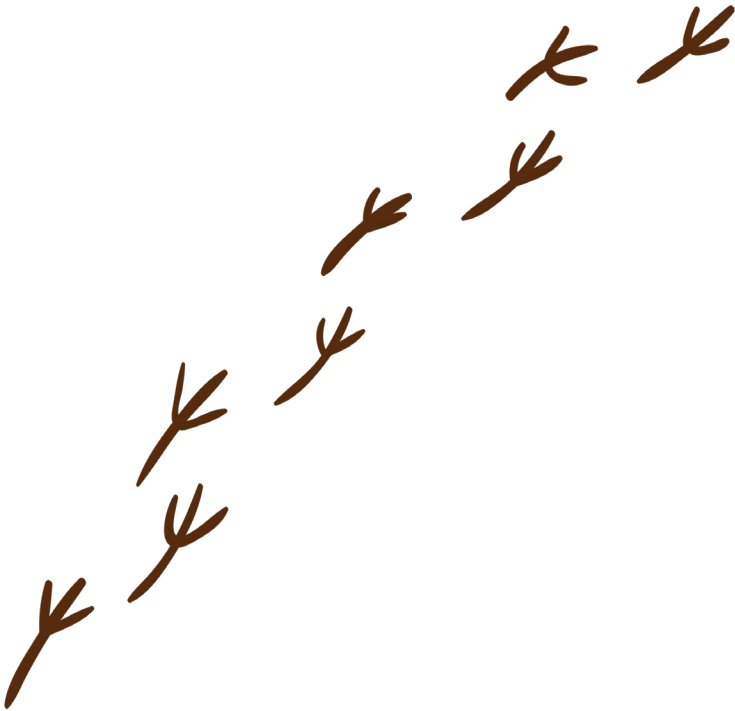
by LB Moore

Scratch, scratch

Look

it's uncertain until
revealed
though I sensed it,
just out of sight

there's nourishment in there
I just need to
uncover it



Unexpected Gift From A Dairy Cow

by Kristina Villa

You can be floating in the clouds, happy as a lark, or you can be aggravated and over the day, but you can never be in a hurry when going to milk your cow. Cows are never in a hurry. They do everything leisurely, as if their days actually contain 48 hours instead of 24, like they have no deadlines and nothing else of importance to accomplish. They chew slowly, they walk slowly, they drink water slowly, and they swat at the flies slowly.

They are never in a rush to come to the milkshed. Yeah, I have treat for them, and yeah, their udders are fat and swollen and need to be milked out, but they'll get there eventually. Out of the whole milking process, there is not a single step that could be done any faster, either. The milk is not going to come out any faster, and it's going to take however many squeezes it takes. There's really nowhere you can cut corners either. Their udders need to be cleaned thoroughly, and the milk all has to be strained. Every single drop.

I have never meditated, and the art of zen has never been a fixture in my life, but with a dairy cow came the mandatory opportunity for those things as well, twice a day, every day.



Interlude



Snapshots of the Seasons Theatre

by Mariana Castro Azpíroz

I. Summer Amphitheatre

Full cast of insects
for opening performance
buzz acapella.

II. Concertino No. 3 in F minor

Footstep percussion
treading over Autumn leaves,
windy orchestra.

III. Snow, choreographed

Inside the flurry,
one perfect twirling snowflake
turns in the spotlight.

IV. Four-Season Fallacy

First snow has melted.
Winter-Spring intermission—
warm weather whispers.

V. Spring Stage Directions

Wet soil and puddles
cue some rabbits into scene:
mud season begins

Living on Monarch Time

by Heather Bernikoff

“You got dirt on your face,” David said. I said, “It’s not dirt; it’s how I make my perfume.” He stared open-eyed trying to figure my meaning, then just shook his head and said, “Whatever. I will see you in an hour. Text me if you need anything from town.” He picked up his tennis bag and headed out the door. Our interactions are often like this. My city boy can’t conceive of the smell of dirt as a perfume, with its olfactory elements of moisture, roots and worm poop. Ahhh, that smell, the smell of life, I always say.

Getting a ranch was my idea. It was a way for me to save what I couldn’t when I was young and powerless. There was so much conversion of my native woods into summer homes and strip malls when I was young that I had to do something now that I was older. What David liked most about the ranch was having no neighbors. Well, ok. We can all have our reasons for loving this place.

Dirt on my face is a regular occurrence. I am constantly pulling weeds - or crazier - on my hands and knees cutting the grasses with scissors around each of my native pollinator plants to prevent competition. I straighten gopher baskets, fix irrigation emitters and tubes, plant new plants, harvest or prune others. When I was in the city, I measured time by what outfit I was wearing – shorts in the summer, long sleeves in the fall, sweaters in the winter and cotton dresses in the spring – well that, and the rapid growth of one of the loves of my life, a little boy turned man that I helped raise.

“Don’t forget you are helping me build fence this afternoon!” I yell after David. I need to remind him all the time of his commitments because it is “easy” for him to “forget” the labor he promises me. Truthfully, I appreciate anything he gives me. I don’t fault him for avoidance; I have become a driven woman requiring more than ever since I read that article about the winter count of the western monarchs taking a nosedive. This is all the long way around to say, I now measure time in monarchs and milkweed, chrysalises and caterpillars.

Tick tock. Like a clock on death row, the movement of each hand shifts loud in my internal ear. I feel responsible. I feel compelled to action. Every plant planted, every minute the plant is alive, it is available as a host, and it is a minute I feel I am winning the imaginary race inside my mind for monarch

survival. This pressure has been a lot to take on, and I know it. Little old me cannot possibly change the course of an entire species – but I guess I am going to try. I’ve learned that the best way to make change is to just dive in and do it. It isn’t quite like tilting at windmills, but the data – millions of butterflies in the 80s to a couple hundred thousand and change today - might be on the side of the windmill. Yet, I cannot sit idly while a relative who can be saved dies.

Monarchs have now become the rhythm of my life. In **January** and **February**, I plan and rest. Then, I look for signs of California Milkweed emergence; it must be **March**. I shut the gate to the cross fence at just the right time after the grasses are grazed and the plants are reaching to the sun. Flowers begin to emerge laying a trail of indescribably fresh, citrusy, floral, green-like scent for the monarch to find. I guess it’s **April**. I look for caterpillars, and a possible glimpse of an adult as it makes its way northeast. **May** is protection. I try to ensure the caterpillars are not picked off one by one. **June**, the seed pods begin to form. When they mature and drop their seed, it means is already **July**. I protect these pods filled with treasure from the mass of grasshoppers that want to eat everything. I want those seeds too for the monarchs’ future. **August**, narrowleaf milkweed matures preparing for potential guests. **September**, I look at the flowers to see if any monarchs decided to stop by as they head southwest. The showy and woolly pod milkweeds are mature. **October**, if I find caterpillars and chrysalises, I protect them too. I feel like a mama, watching and waiting, hoping for the best, being there to help in the worst. I count and recount. How many more caterpillars are there today than yesterday? If less, did I miss one? Did they move to another plant? Did they find an “in plain sight” but still invisible place to make a “J”, awaiting rigor mortus, then metamorphosis, then rebirth. I count miracles, then count my good fortune to bear witness. **November**, I plant more plants, make more homes of milkweed for the next generation, a larger generation...I hope. Hope + action = no regrets. I want no regrets.

In **December**, David and I do a recap of the year, discuss what could be better, what goals we will have next year. David realizes all the work we’ve done. He leans in and says, “You smell good.” I say, “I’ve been in the dirt again.” He says, “I know. I am so proud.”



Monarch
Lauren Kawamura

Two Smashed Leg Bones and the View from My Bed

by Annie Warmke

Today's word is "Breathe...Just watch me." It feels like a command, a dare. I was that girl—the one who hung upside down in a dress on the school monkey bars during recess (a great way to "breathe" and relax). I'd race faster than the boys, who'd yank the sash on my dress, trying to catch me. Severe punishment awaited if I showed up after school with a ripped sash; being "unladylike" was strictly forbidden.

Apple tree climbing was my favorite unladylike pursuit—a place to hide, breathe with nature, and be myself. Climbing a tree meant punishment, but I did it anyway.

What did those messages pass on to me and my brother? The message that a girl could only behave a certain way in order to be accepted. Except that being accepted was a rarity because smart articulate girls were to be silenced..."Seen and not heard" as my mother would say.

Farming life lends itself to that little girl in all of us...the one that climbs trees or likes to get dirty (that's still some of the best things about farm life). As I recover from my injuries I'm determined to listen to her more. She's full of fun and loads of mental health ideas.

Finding that young girl these days is tough—no recent tree climbing or hanging upside down. But that "just watch me" can-do spirit still burns within me. My life embodies that daring defiance.

Gathering Seeds of Ecological Knowledge: A Found Poem in the Zoom Chat*

by Amie Adams

Where you live: here just for a tiny blip on the timeline. Your life—seed, picture, notebook, email—a window into day-to-day history. Your life, an act of honoring.

*We feel emotional and energetic shifts.
the soil calls out for help
buds break before last freeze
plums ripen early
the chipmunks are especially savage this year
phenological indicators overlap
have the sounds of insects lingered longer than usual?*

(My phone battery is about to die, sorry everyone!)

Mud—it's gone. The ground did not freeze. Creeks: dry. Our rivers should be swelling. Politics = insanity. We cannot drink ethanol, and the river otter cannot drink it either.

Earth is being changed by the human hand. We all feel the collective sadness of changes. What used to be predictable patterns, the phenology of place, have shifted.

*We miss...
"real winter"
daytime thunderstorms
fireflies*

(Hello to your kitty Piper. Great to have animal spirits join in.)

We must continue to celebrate the beauty around us daily. Otherwise, we will not have energy to put one foot in front of the other, to restore land to life.

Think of foraging wild leeks, fall colors, harvest. First thunder, last frost. Lunar cycles and allllll the frog calls.

*compost radiates heat like the warmth of a fire
fingertips grasp a plump black raspberry
chickadees sing "Sweet Canada!"
dablias transform summer energy into flowers
the insect orchestra plays on
maple sap boiling helps stave off February blues*

*All we can do is keep going.
Shear sheep
experiment, plant early
harvest willow
By gum - come to Ames and sing the seasons with you all!
befriend the wind
host ice cream socials for watershed neighbors
support young ones who are feeling sadness
start seeds
build greenhouses from Craigslisted windows and dumpster wood
offer hermitage
water trees
prescribe burns*

New research shows that the spring ephemerals (those showy woodland wildflowers we love) are stimulated by smoke. Who knew?

*Since August 2023, a group of Iowa women farmers and land caretakers have been meeting on Zoom to gather ecological knowledge to compile into a calendar. All the words of this poem were lifted from the Zoom chat during our meetings.

Sound Maps

by Danielle Wirth

I. Sunrise Singers

Early birds: Goldfinch, nuthatch, chickadees. Now rose-breasted grosbeaks and orioles with their “round” and deep sound. More. Breeze rises: western chorus frogs call throughout the day. Turkeys respond to a squeaky sliding door opening and closing. Blue Jays join (they must sleep in)...woodpeckers drum on tree snags, and cabin trim boards, sometimes the metal gutters. Drumming is used ceremonially in spring to mark territory. And more subtly, to dig out insects hidden in rotted wood (hopefully, not my cabin). Chickadees say their name - the one humans gave them, although I bet they have their own name - and names for us too. One red-winged blackbird haunts the feeder, probably the grandson of a male who found our feeder a few years ago, has left his tribe to forage in the road side prairie where he courts the girls with sunflower seeds. Song sparrows, nuthatches with a big voice for a tiny bird--necessary for a bird who must call through dense forest foliage. Titmouse too has a big voice for a small bird. red-bellied woodpeckers add to the music.

II. The Day Warms

More voices in the chorus. Mother bumble bees dip into the Virginia bluebells. Deep, heavy buzzing and the many smaller native bees add the higher notes to the morning prayers. I enjoy hearing more of their chorus - and as little of human intrusive sound as I can get.

III. Night Melody

Daytime singers are quieting. The veil between day and night - a time for a different symphony. Early on, the young barred owls start their “Who Cooks for You, Who Cooks for You All” (with an epiglottal click at the end that my discerning son pointed out to me a long time ago). Add the soft alto of mourning doves, still queuing on remaining light, western chorus frogs are joined by the single notes of tiny spring peepers in a chorus, sounding like silver bells; and American toads trilling with songs that rise and decline as in waves; most recently, to sing for the rain, gray tree frogs often sit on the cabin to hunt insects in the light of our solar lamps. Gone for over two decades, we hear the whip-poor-will @ 8:31 PM. Ground nesters, they are so vulnerable to the enhanced meso-predators like possums, raccoons and

striped skunks. Later in the season, we'll hear the buzzing of night hawks hunting insects. Maybe great horned owls too, but for now, this is barred owl valley, the only dark eyed owl in our community.

I can hear who is nearby and who is further out; who sings from the savanna, who is on the edge of the prairie, and which voices drift up from the creek or across the valley ridges. One night a few years ago, I sat on my deck with two sleeping Labrador retrievers. It was an intensely hot day. We'd been out for hours. Dogs damp from creek splashing, night sounds were rising as the pale blue sky went to rose/amber/orange. Coyote calls, in a pack, getting ready to hunt... night birds still warming up. At just the edge of my low range of hearing, a deep rumble... silence, my comatose dogs sat up, alert in the direction of the creek valley. All is still. Only minutes later, tentatively, the night dialogue resumes. I am sure we've just heard a mountain lion growl.



The Alliums and I

by Lynora Stallsmith

As I passed the pallet of onion sets on my way into the feedmill to buy baking soda for hide tanning and feed for the chickens, I had to stop to let someone out the door. But after they had passed, I still lingered there, inhaling the familiar scent of dirt and alliums, recalling which varieties I had grown before. I knew I would not have time to take care of them. I barely had time to go to the feed mill and the grocery store between my Dad's week long chemo treatments in the city and tanning deer hides to try and make ends meet. This would be my first full summer entirely devoid of any real farming in seven years. Still, when I went to check out, I had not one but two little bundles of starts in my hands.

Maybe, subconsciously, they pulled me back to my first far from home job in Long Island New York. One of the first tasks after I arrived for the season was planting sets off of a water wheel transplanter in the biting wind. Or maybe to a season in Maine where we planted three onions in each hole in an attempt to win a war with the wireworms. Perhaps they beckoned to Pennsylvania during spring 2020, where, in the midst of a world in upheaval, the familiar rhythms of plowing and planting kept me sane.

There's just certain things you have to stop life for. It happened again in late summer. Blueberry season. I pulled the morning glory off of the bushes in the abandoned garden, and all felt right again in the world with the steady plunk plunk into our pails. The year previous I had been in Alaska at this time. Watching folks harvest salmonberries on the tundra had felt at once intimately familiar and a stark reminder that I was far from the region of my roots. In every place there are traditions that keep us grounded. In training for that job we had learned that First Peoples' depth of connection to their traditions in individual villages can be quantifiably linked to fewer mental health crises in those villages. Of course. It's no surprise.

A few weeks after the blueberries I picked elderberries, thinking of how two years before my grandfather, a farmer in his 90s, had accurately guessed the exact week that the elderberries on the farm two states over that I was working on would ripen, in his weekly letter to me. Maybe I come by it honestly, this need for dirt under my nails. In fall I harvested the itty-bitty onions before the first frost, an ode to my past jobs, my family, and to the

season's change.

Come November, a miracle happened when they scheduled my father's first round of chemo in this, our second wave of trying to beat the cancer which had returned, on the second day of deer season. I can't remember a year that my dad didn't get a deer, though I am told that there was one. I sat in my stand, not far from his, on opening morning, dearly hoping to hear a shot from his gun. It didn't take long. I drug his doe out of the woods, as he had drug out my first deer over a decade before, so deeply grateful that this intrinsic marker of time was not taken from us as so many others had been by this disease called cancer.

There are many things in rural living to mark one's life by. Haying season, maple season, the times of cutting and burning firewood... Always they are significant, but I know I treasure them most when life's in tumult. The slow, steady, dependable things bring back some semblance of normalcy and light in a way I feel unable to put words to.

I recently made the hard decision that this summer, again, I will not be farming. My Dad has improved by leaps and bounds, but regaining ground is a long process. And yet, you can bet that this spring when I go to the feedmill I'll be unable to walk past the onion sets. I'll buy them not for their nutritional value—they may still be choked out by weeds with the amount of time I'll have for them—but for some other unnamable value that putting plants into soil gives. It's the very embodiment of hope, of investing in tomorrow and affirming one's tenuous belief in better days ahead.



The Run

by NancyAnne Hickman

Over half of my life, I've been a runner,
I run trails fall, winter, spring and summer.
It's not just the run but the connection it brings,
To humans, flowers, animals and trees.
Running through seasons with my friends,
Embracing each season's beginning and end.

In dark of winter,
lovely stars shining bright,
A reminder there's light,
no matter how dark the night,
One special black night I see magic above,
The Northern Lights are right there spreading their love.

Running for miles,
in the rain March brings,
But no other way
we would see the first bloom of spring!

My friend reminds me to embrace the rain,
And jump in mud puddles along the way.
The heat of summer is a hard test,
But we train early mornings, then plan to travel west.

Running with friends on mountain vacations,
Wildflowers bring the look of awe to our faces.
Climbing up, Eyes wide as we see.
A moose, then a bear, running in front of me.

On top of the mountain, a storm gives us fear,
But after the storm a rainbow appears.
On to cooler temps of the fall,
That fresh air smell is special to us all.

The fall is filled with many colorful leaves,
We love every step, of that leafy path (made from trees).
Some seasons bring Challenges, in life and running,
Some bring beauty and light, that's ever so stunning.
But through those dark moments,

Where we barely see light,
We'll come out on the other side,
with more strength and fight.

As my run ends I see something special,
The middle of the grass is where it's nestled.
Eyes shut, wish made, I blow seeds into the air.
I open my eyes and think, nature's magic is truly everywhere.



Autumn



Harvest

by Taylor Jones

Head bent over the table like the sunflowers' heads were bent over the garden,
sorting seeds.
So much water sunlight & labor
fits into a single jar.





AN introduction to natural DYE Projects (from one novice to another!)

Glossary

Mordant: a mineral salt that bonds to the fabric when soaked in a solution before dyeing. Mordanting helps dyes fix to fabric & ensures long-lasting colors.

Cellulose fibers:

Plant-based fibers, such as cotton, linen & bamboo

Protein fibers:

animal fibers, such as wool, silk & cashmere

3

Methods for Natural Dyeing

1. Bundle Dyeing

- sprinkle dry flowers on $\frac{1}{2}$ your fabric
- fold fabric and roll up into a snail shaped bundle
- place in colander or basket inside your dye pot & steam for 30 mins on low. let dry.



3. A Simple Dye Pot

- wet your fabric with warm water
- bring plant matter & water to a simmer; simmer for 30 mins
- strain out plant matter, and heat dye gently
- submerge your damp fabric, adding water if needed
- heat fabric in dye pot for at least 30 mins
- Dry & enjoy your new creation!

2. Flower Pounding

- use fresh flowers or stems
- lay out flowers on your fabric
- cover with another layer of fabric and use a mallet or hammer to create an impression
- peel back your fabric layer
- optional: set prints using the heat from an iron.

4. Dye Plants to Use (FRESH or DRIED!)

- Purple Pin cushion - dark purple
- Dyer's Chamomile - butter yellow
- Marigolds - bright yellows & greens, depending on variety
- Tango Cosmos - vibrant oranges & reds!

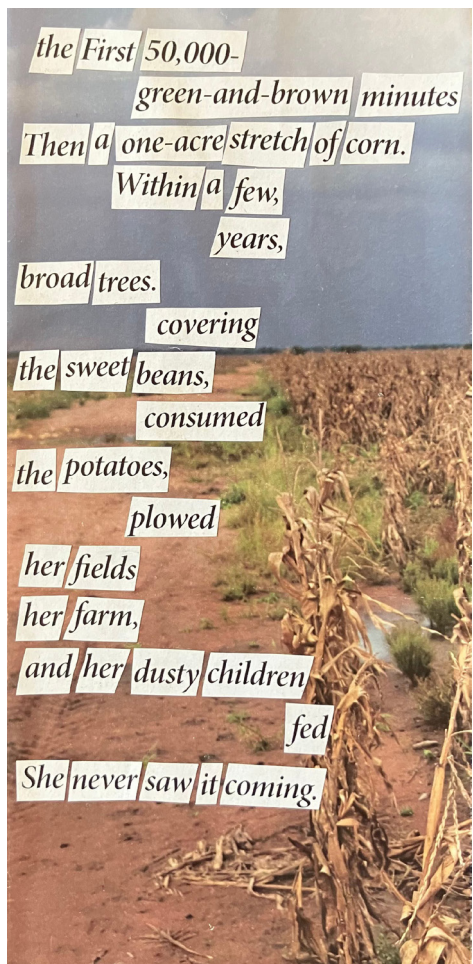
Note: Your dye pot should not be a cooking pot. Choose a stainless steel or enamel pot and reserve it for dye baths only.

Harvest Morning

by Kara Grady

We begin as dark shadows against a blue-black haze
White puffs of breath
The flash of a smile
Letting us know where each other is
As we move between buildings, gathering materials
Our fingers cold and clumsy but together
Then as outlines of lavender and pink
We circle up to hear the morning tasks
Some sip hot coffee from thermoses
Others jump up and down for warmth
Eyes crusty with sleep, we trod forth together
To begin our harvest amongst the fields
As the sun breaks forth
Long fingers of warm gold light
Caress our features and we can finally see
The blue of the sky
The green of the fields
And each other
Our spirits rise together
With the sun's warmth
Banishing sleepiness and shadow
Our hands move swifter as we
Pick, carry, wash, weigh, box
Laugh, talk, murmur, sigh
And if we're lucky weed
Or even luckier, pick flowers
And watch the bees and flies
Warm themselves and begin their incessant buzz
Now with two layers of clothes discarded
The fields full of voices and chatter
The bell rings
And we come back, together
To share roses, buds, thorns

To be with friends
To let the land teach us
To feed our bodies and spirits
We all come, together
On harvest morning.



Terrarium

by Lea Camille Smith

Lighthouses, granite pillars, rocks in between,
and me, cradling this glass tube of you, Mother.
I stared in it year-round, mourned you four times.

Mother

of rooting, of binding, mother of webs. Belt
a mica bank to a mineral bay. Mother of seas,
sweep me salty; produce me in smooth pebble.

Mother

mud, shape and mottle me. Be for me a beacon
of ubiquity. You're better off out here, Mother.
I'm a woman too, Mother, I have crimson tides.

Mother,

why do I notice you more on season's closing?
Why try to bottle you still? You are inevitable.
I'll break this crystalline bottle on the rocks,

Mother.

Freed from your burnished looking glass, Mother.
Take your hands again and take my shards, Mother.
Soften the edges, Mother. Wipe me clean, winter

Mother,

and I'll return, pasty, for sea glass, spring Mother.
For now Mother, cold comes. Still, the want to cork
you airless is there, but then I'd never hear you again,

Mother.

How to Host a Community Clothing Swap

by Lauren Marolis

I founded and organize a community clothing swap in Omaha, NE called Dottie's Swap (IG: @dotties.swap). Dottie's is a swap focused on making plus sized and gender affirming clothing more accessible. I began Dottie's because as a queer person who lives in a plus-size body I have always felt it difficult to fully participate at clothing swaps, despite how much I enjoy attending them with my friends. I knew that I must not be alone in feeling that way and wanted to build a safe community for other plus sized LGBTQIA+ folks. We named our swap after the phrase "friend of Dorothy" as a nod to all of those who were not able to fully leave the "closet" and live their most authentic lives or ever fully express themselves. Clothing is such an essential part of gender expression and gender affirming clothing should be accessible to all. Here are some tips for hosting your own clothing swap.

What is a clothing swap?

- A clothing swap is an event where friends or members of a community come together and exchange clothing they no longer need or want. Typically, there is no money involved and these events are free to attend.
- My first foray into swapping clothes was in friends' homes. We would dump all of our clothing into a pile on the living room floor or go around in a circle taking turns showing off garments we had brought to exchange while people claimed them. These events doubled as potlucks and have become one of my favorite ways to gather people socially!

Why host a clothing swap?

- Clothing swaps are a great way to build community and are a great tool to specifically build inclusive communities.
- They are an alternative "shopping" experience that can be a safe space for those residing in marginalized bodies to access clothing that fits well/ is gender affirming.
- They offer an accessible way for folks to find clothing if their body has recently gone through changes and they now need different sized/fitting clothing.

- o It is often difficult to find plus size clothing in stores (even thrift stores!) and many affordable plus size options only exist through fast fashion websites.
- Sourcing clothing second hand is an environmentally conscious practice. By hosting a swap, you are helping keep clothes in circulation and out of landfills.
- It is an accessible way to find seasonally appropriate clothing without participating in overconsumption or buying a whole new wardrobe.
- It's a fun, cheap way to switch up your style!

How to start a community clothing swap

- Figure out what your why is and who you are holding space for.
- Find co-collaborators. Hosting a swap alone is a lot of work and not as fun. Find a friend or two to help!
- Find a venue. Clothing swaps typically do not generate revenue, find a community space who may host you for free or at a lower cost.
- Get the word out! Fliers, social media, and word of mouth are all great tools.

Questions to Consider

- Will you require clothing to be dropped off ahead of time?
 - o At Dottie's we require drop-off ahead of time so we can make sure clothes are of good quality and so we can sort and organize them.
- What will your donation standards be?
- Will you be vetting donations ahead of time by assessing them for cleanliness, rips, holes, tears, and stains?
- How often will you be hosting this event?
 - o We host our swap quarterly to help folks find seasonally appropriate clothing ahead of the next season!
- What supplies do you need?
 - o You may need bins, hangers, clothing racks, and supplies to label things. Try to find these things for free before buying them or thrift them if you can!
- How will participation work?
 - o You can use the honor system or give out tickets (i.e. 1 ticket per

item brought to the swap).

o At Dottie's we usually reserve the first two hours for swappers only and then open it up to anyone, regardless of whether or not they have something to swap.

- How long will the event last?

- Where will the leftover items go?

o We donate our items to several local organizations that distribute clothing to women and trans folks in need.

Much like the seasons, our bodies and circumstances will change. Having strong community support networks is important to weather these changes when they occur. Clothing swaps offer a way to build this community by offering a safe space to find clothing and bond over a shared love of secondhand fashion. When people find clothing that fits them well, they feel good and they can put more good out into the world.





Winter



Welcoming Winter with Advent Candles

by Amie Adams

At Mustard Seed Community Farm, we close the growing season by making hand-dipped taper candles from a mixture of beeswax and recycled wax, often recycled from large altar candles. Traditional Advent candles are lit to symbolize hope, love, joy, and peace. As dark days close in, we dip candles and offer intentions of hope, love, joy, and peace to our world.

Supplies

- Heat source: stove, induction burner, etc.
- Dipping vat
- A pot to melt wax into
- 2 pots to use as double boilers
- A stainless steel spoon
- Loose weave muslin or old pantyhose for straining wax
- At least 1 short board with 4 small grooves cut into it (more if you want to make a lot of candles)
- 4 large metal nuts per board
- Candle wicking
- Enough wax to fill your vat at least twice
- Pie pans to pour off unused wax
- Wax dye

Instructions

Frame Set Up

1. Cut a single piece candle wicking to the desired length for 2 candles. Tie a nut to each end. Drape over the board and fit into the grooves. Repeat this process for each board.
2. Prepare an area for your boards to hang while they cool.

Prepping Wax

1. Break larger candles into smaller chunks to fit in your melting pot.
2. Remove burned bits from any recycled candles.

Boiler Set Up

1. Create double boilers by placing your vat and your melting pot each into their own pot of hot water. Bring the double boilers to a gentle boil.
2. Start melting wax into your pot. Add dye to reach your desired color.
3. When the wax has melted enough to strain, cover the melting pot with the pantyhose and strain the melted wax into the vat.
4. Continue melting and filling your vat until the vat is full.

Dipping

1. Using two hands, lower the board into the vat. The board should rest on top of the vat with the wax reaching up close to the top of the wicks. On the first dip, let the wicks rest in the vat until no more air bubbles come out of them. Remove the board, hold it above the vat until the dripping stops, and return it to the frame.
2. Repeat this step until you come to the end of the round, refilling wax if needed.*
3. After the first round, you should dip the candles in and out of the vat quickly. Do not let the board rest on the vat. Simply dip until the board taps the top, and pull it right back out.
4. Repeat this process, refilling wax and stirring as necessary. Stir as often as you refill, if not more. Make sure to mark your progress at the end of each round.
 - a. During the first few dips, make sure your candles stay straight as they grow. You can smooth them out if necessary. Just be gentle.
 - b. Make sure to monitor temperature. You will want to turn the heat down in increments, and most of your dipping will take place on low heat.
5. After 10 dips, your candles should be thick enough to remove the nuts. Cut the nut off each candle using a hot scissor or a hot knife (heat your tool in the water in the double boiler), smoothing the end of the candle while it is warm.
6. When you reach about 16-18 dips, use a hot knife to trim the drip that has formed at the bottom of the candle. Cut as close to the base as possible. Smooth if necessary. Then dip 1-2 more times.
7. When your candles are finished, move them to the cooling area.

General advice about wax levels:

Keep the wax at the same level in the vat, refilling as necessary. You can tell that the wax needs to be refilled by monitoring the level in the vat. You also might notice that the wax is not reaching as high on the wicks as before. You want each dip to hit the wax in the same place. When you start off, you will probably only need to refill the wax once at the end of each round, as the candles grow you might need to refill the wax every 3 or 4 dips.

Clean Up

1. Empty your vat by pouring the remaining wax into pie pans to cool.
2. Turn off burners and let boilers cool.



Arrival, Glendree Bog

by Tara Labovich

i.

as december fog settles over the bog
i taste knitted peat in me
til smoke spills my lips,
til i speak, til

i sing the lost

sounds.

ii.

when i land on her shores, she unfurls
her fossils, but keeps the marrow tight.
bundles, bunches of deep green spurt
through peat'd skeleton.

she extends a fingernail.
songs of ling
heather & deer
sedge.

i clump and tussock too

in meaning making.

iii.

in winter, i die
back to deep root.
i keep looking at the dead
head. i forget the bulbs, forget my readiness

for warmth, forget
how it comes
again—the rooting,
the reaching, remembering

the living, again, remind me,
again.

iv.

on her edges an echo: mummified history,
buried hearths, & the sticky sinking
into a stack of decomposing mothers:
a wound that does not heal.

v.

this is where they hide our bodies, where
they slough off the cramping
shame. death, not-quite
solid, wraps round her new wards,

laces a veil. when they pressed their large
hand to muffle our voice, their offense
became fossil. we made our home
among our dead. our dead, turned

peat'd fuel. our skin

leathered into memory.

v.

here, i ring
in the memory beneath my feet.
old tales & spilt
drink & unripened

bulbs & beaten
paths and—
this is the first
step to remembering:

the buried body,

unearthed.

Finding Winter's Embrace

by Ciara O'Brien

In the solitude of winter's rest,
the land slumbers beneath its snowy blanket.
Where once seedlings danced on gentle breezes,
now only whispers of memories remain.

The grower waits, patient yet restless,
hands itching to till the earth once more.
But winter's grasp holds firm,
its icy fingers clinging to the soil.

Oh, how it weighs upon the soul,
this longing for renewal, for life, for growth.
To watch as seeds emerge from the soil,
to witness the miracle of life begun again.

Yet in this stillness, there is beauty,
a different kind of rhythm that beats.
For in the silence, dreams take root,
and hope blooms in the heart of the grower.

So, though the winter may be never ending
and the ground may seem barren and cold,
We persist, knowing that
beneath the surface, life stirs, waiting to emerge



Beckoning the New Year

by Crystal Jewell

Consumed by a fire, the Night Sun
Disappears into the horizon
Bringing life into Her children
Break of daylight you'll hear them sighing.

She'll awaken – when the maple sap flows
When the winds are not too cold for crows
When chickadees reveal what they know
And stinging nettles sprout new growth.

Water flows through Her
Woven golden strands of rooted willow in a sandbar
Wave a welcome to the Morning Sun
Whose luminous glow captures all attention.

“My dear creation, please listen!”
He says with a smile so bright moles close their eyes.
“Your Mother has awoken. Be gentle,
Move slowly, watch for Her spring beauties.”

“Sing softly as she cradles you tightly
In a spiderweb of her braided hair.
Offer her your gifts, for you exist
On a drop of dew in a rainbow.”

Morning Sun beams as the winter frost melts
Retreating to the black raspberry canes
Among bundles of river grape vines
Who wait for summertime to arrive.

Sleepy eyes, opening wide – She stretches,
Awakening the budding branches,
Whispering congratulations,
“Arise, children. Let the new year begin.”

windy words

by Kayla Nichols

i am fluent in blustery january wind
my words whipping wistfully through the air
before changing their cadence—
big billowing afternoon gusts
that settle into silent snow-blanketed nights
this isn't to say my tongue is cold
no, it is crisp like winter apples
and bright like peppermint
it zings like hot cider, and
delights in twinkling stars
made brighter



THE MELT

by Geneva Toland

In February the sun returned
and dissolved thick ice and snow

into ponds on the sidewalk,
revealing grass still slight-green—a wonder!

They call this “fool’s spring,”
as if the “real spring” is still arriving,

a spring imagined
where warmth never leaves

and long-necked days
burst only flower petal
and bloom.

When did we forget?
Spring is not for us.

It is for the gods of winter
and summer who jostle

for king of the hill,
and no victor is assumed.

Winter sends its sharp ice and thorn
into summer’s effervescence,

while summer laughs and laughs
through the honks

of thousands of north-beaked geese
landing their thick white bellies

on winter’s stubborn-freeze.
Winter drops snow and hail in spontaneous

drifts, while summer shakes branches

from wet and slumber
with hot-breathed wind.

Winter spites, freezes buds
summer risked swelling too soon,

and to save the un-bloomed flowers
the finches, throats cracked from cold,

sing warmth over each
fragile knob.

As do the chickadees who court
spring's soft lips

with their two-note number—Hey Sweetie!

Along with the cardinals,
who thrust their puffed crowns

to the canopy
and call themselves hero.

All of life joins in
this audacious chorus

of summer's insistent belief that
all must—go on.

When did we forget?
Everything, everything, alive is a survival song.

Look now, the spring snow
sparkles brightest against the melt.

Gratitudes

This zine would not exist without the imagination, talent, and generosity of our many contributors and partners. Our gratitude for each of you is immense.

To our contributors: thank you for sharing your work with us. Your words and art are great gifts, and we are so glad you've given us the opportunity to share them with the world.

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To the earth: thank you for being our source of life, inspiration, and our home. This is all a love letter to you.

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