

Kathy's Garden: THE LOST GARDEN

A rather frivolous novel I've been reading between visits to my garden claims that there are three primary human endeavors that, at their best, blend nature and art – cooking, sex and gardening. I know the last two can lead to heartbreak. Maybe the first can as well, but I have never cared quite so passionately about my scones as about beings contacted in the pursuit of the latter two categories.

The most poignant garden heartbreak is the necessity of leaving a well loved garden. The other afternoon I was talking with a friend, who, after some 7 or 8 years shaping a garden and at last beginning to see the whole, achieving the picture she had at the onset, has had to leave it.

In midsummer she has taken up residence in a caretaking place, facing the dry ground, water shortage, and a great longing for the beauties of her lost garden.

The pangs of Adam and Eve felt on leaving Eden were nothing at all like those a gardener feels leaving a loved garden behind. When they left Eden, our primeval pair had not yet begun digging and delving; Eve had not coaxed some paradisaical rose through the branches of an apple tree. O happy Fall – their gardening days were yet to come.

My friend, taking a few promised cuttings from my garden, said she'd never garden again on land that wasn't her own. But in the next moment she was thinking aloud, "well, maybe a little arch near the porch, with a *Cecille Brunner* rose clambering over it, and..." Might as well determine never to

love again as never to plant a garden. If you have a passionate gardener's heart you can't repress it.

So, what is the gardener to do when faced with the ephemeral nature of life, love and gardens on other people's land?

Emboldened by the example of my mother, an Air Force Officer's wife who made garden after garden, knowing that we would have to leave it in a few years, I have always gardened in bold and hopeful disregard of future upheaval and heartbreak. In practical terms this has meant enduring even the prospect of watching a loved garden fall to bulldozers and "progress", a fate I wish on no one.

Though I garden now on land deeded to my name, I think a lot about the problems of gardeners with less apparent security. To these gardeners I offer two strategies. One is noble disregard of fate. Go on, garden for the future. If you are not there to pick the sweet apples or smell the roses you plant now, someone else will be there. Live passionately today & plant with passion for tomorrow. Put in a tree that will reach its peak of beauty in 50 years. Do it.

And since you need the selfish comfort of immediate beauty, if you are in a clearly transitory garden space, use containers. Mass your porch or windowsill or fire escape with the most extravagantly beautiful plants you can find. The heavily fragrant Oriental lilies will consent to grow in pots. You'll probably want the shorter ones, like *Star Gazer* or *Miss Rio*. You can afford to choose



a few of the best and rarest things – candy pink and cream frilled Petit Four daffodils, the small species tulips that are often overwhelmed in bigger gardens – *Heart's Delight* and *Sweet Lady*, perhaps; little pots of double snowdrops and blue chinodoxa and silky green striped Star of Bethlehem.

One garden I had was a potted *azalea* on a Paris windowsill. Some may doubt that this was a garden. Gardeners in transition know, however, that just as Emily Dickinson once contended you need only one clover, one bee, and reverie to make a prairie, so you need only a single plant and an attentive heart to make a garden. The heart, or reverie, will do when bees or plants are few.

~Kathy Epling

1
*autumn casts out spring
into the grey green fields the
ever green trees
and winter comes creeping
a mouth of cold
a mist that never burns away*

2
*my mama wanted witchcraft
and the forest extended to her
a blanket of violets and heather
and so the space that is now left without her
crackles with a heavy silence - old world weather*

3
*the old cat died
sunwarmed between the clouds
a little bundle of fluff and
a November memory*

4
*pull down the skin of sky
stars shook loose fall to
oceans open mouth
and I
asleep
dream of earthquakes and
cherries rinsed and waiting
wet on the edge of the sink*

-Laurel Epling



Dedicated to bringing the best
in reading and entertainment to
Southern Humboldt.

10am - 5pm
Monday-Saturday



(707) 499-5471

901 Redwood Drive, Garberville, California

**Garberville Chiropractic
Family Health Care**

(707) 923-9343
Brian M. Ormond, D.C.
353 Sprowel Creek Road, Garberville

**CHAUTAUQUA
NATURAL FOODS**

Open Mon-Sat 9am-7pm • Sundays 10am-5pm

Organic Foods • Vitamins • Herbs
Body Care Products
(707) 923-2452
783 Locust St. Garberville, CA 95542