



# Kathy's Garden: HOPE, FAITH & LOVE

Though the air is sweet the ground is still too cold & wet in my gardens to be worked. It is the sort of springtime weather that sets the fanatic gardener to strange thoughts & schemes. "What if one were to

grow all the plants ever written about in Emily Dickinson's poems," one muses, or - I really think you need a solarium. I could grow oranges and lemons and orchids...

In such a frame of mind I sat in my lower garden admiring the modesty & idly considering whether I should, perhaps, grow the white flowered & variegated-leaf forms of honesty as well as the pretty purple sort that does so well for me. "Honesty, modesty..." Suddenly I thought how easily one could cultivate all the virtues - if not in one's soul, then in one's garden at least. Your plant list would begin to read like something from a Puritan name book.



The plant I have always known as modesty is *Whipplea modesta*, whose other common name is *Yerba de selva*. You won't find it in nurseries, unless they specialize in native plants, but you will find this gentle little member of the *saxifrage* family covering slopes & the edges of woods. It carpets parts of my fir woods in green, flowering in dense white clusters from late April til summer. It grows happily with *honesty (lunaria)* & would no doubt be please to share a virtuous corner with, say, *chastity* as well.

So far as I know there is no plant thus named, but there is a pretty blue flowered shrub, *vitex agnus-castas*, known as the chaste tree. I haven't got it in my garden yet. Years ago I proposed to my true love of the season that we plant it. My love did not relish the virtue & vetoed the little tree. It is a pretty thin, however, with gray green leaves and lavender-blue flowers. It cherishes hot sun. You would need to put in the sunlit corner of your garden of virtue.



In the same sunny corner the tufts of *armeria*, with its pink & rose balls of flowers held above the foliage would look very charming. Sea-pink is the common name, but in our virtuous planting scheme we'd use the older name, *thrift*, & feel very clever. The flowers of *thrift* bloom at about the same time as the flowering of the chaste tree: two virtues at once!

The Chinese Houses, *collinsia*, I mention before, are also called *Innocence*, & would drift very nicely at the shaded edge of this garden, where the equally pink & white spikes of *physostegia* would bloom. *Physostegia*, or obedient plant, will tolerate sun as well. The white flowered sort is particularly beautiful & makes long last bouquets, should you need a virtue or two indoors.

*Rue* doesn't sound so much like a virtue as like the state of repentance for virtue's loss. Still, under the pretty old name *herb o'grace* you might include it. *Ruta graevole* is very easy from seed, which sprouts in a couple weeks in moist well-drained soil (wait till the ground warms a bit first, though). The blue green foliage has a complex bitter-sweet fragrance. I like it a lot; some people don't enjoy it. Some people also get a poison-oak type rash from the leaves, so you'd best be planted rue back from the edges of paths. It likes sun but has grown for me for many years in ever-increasing shade.

There isn't, so far as I know, a plant called Patience. A pity, for it would be helpful to have one handy. Love you can have in your garden in great plenty. If you think love a virtue & not, perhaps, a fatal flaw. You can have *love-in-a-mist*, all blue & rose & white flowers in whorls of thread-like green leaves. *Persian Jewels* is the multicolored mix of *nigella*, giving a raspberry pink, a nice blue, and various tired off-whites. *Miss Jekyll's Blue* is an excellent sky spectacular; it was offered under the name *Oxford Blue*. My plants reverted to pale blue & alas I have never seen this variety offered. Love is, after all, subject to change.

*Love-lies-a-bleeding* is the old name for *amaranthus caudatus* with its rusy red tassels of bloom. It's not pretty, but children like to stroke the long strange blooms, which are velvety to the touch.

And as it is pleasant to find excuses to plant more roses, you could search for cultivators with useful names: there are fine hybrid teas with names like *Love, Honor, and Cherish; First Love. Purity* is a beautiful white rambler bred in the early years of this century - but roses do not seem to have been named with virtue in mind. Indeed, considering how to translate the name of one of my favorite old climbing roses, *Cuisse de Nymphé Emue*, for a family newspaper, makes my spring-dizzy mind veer to thoughts of a garden of vices.

Lest that happen I rush to consider hope and faith, which have no plants named for them, but without which no gardener would dare go on, & which, with love, are the foundations of any garden, any time.



~ Kathy Epling

## Robert 'Red' Riley d. June 4 2005

From death's high water  
things return, beach glass &  
shoes & shattered plastic angels  
with erased eyes

trinkets of a foam of  
glittered longing. Yes, I want  
your comfort now you are dead  
this driftwood world

all sea & turned tide bringing  
your scattered ashes home  
to salt air where I fold  
these empty sleeves with nothing  
else to hold

Kathy Epling

## The Means of Survival

There wasn't for you that green  
childhood of cut grass & barbecues  
Instead we hammer out corners  
a decoration of broken mirrors  
a carousel edge with rain promised  
pale afternoons  
watercolor placid, my acid daughter  
with runic eyes

& a citric smile, balanced  
where I want to toss you  
knives & capes & roses  
the means of survival

Here's the way down  
Never count on the net  
or the clowns.

My hands too have their bracelets  
of scars. This life's acrobatic  
It can catch you.

Kathy Epling

## At The Edge Of Death's Curtain

Lines in someone's poem  
pause in this dance

no one stumbles

the sparrow's feather  
caught in briar

the oblique glance

not at stage center  
though the lights shine

whose are these borrowed lines  
at the edge of death's curtain

Kathy Epling

**HEMP CONNECTION**

707-923-4851

412 Maple Lane  
Garberville, CA  
95542

Teresa Mills  
Marie Mills

**Purveyor of Fine Hemp Products**

**KEEP CALM AND LET THE PARALEGAL HANDLE IT**

**Lampport Legal Documents**

(707) 923-4372

867 B Redwood Drive Garberville, CA 95542  
Humboldt County Legal Document Assistant Reg. #99-001

Wills- Living Wills- Power of Attorney-  
- Name Change- Contracts-  
-Social Security Applications- Partnerships-  
-Freedom of Information Act Requests-  
-Guardianship- Forms of all Kinds-  
& Notary Service.

**CHINUTAUQUA 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