

Kathy's Garden: GROUNDING YOUR PASSIONS

To my non-gardening friends, gardening seems a genteel avocation. They imagine the happy gardener, attired in trendy *Smith & Hawken* garden gear, gently strolling the garden paths, pausing now & again to cut a bouquet of roses or pluck a basket of perfect strawberries before strolling sedately back to the house.

This vision leaves the sweat out of the picture. It leaves out the reek of fish emulsion, the clay-encrusted hands, the battles over broken fences & broken waterlines, the stand-offs with deer & drought. It also leaves out the passion—both the passion evoked by the gentian at long last brought to blinding blue & white bloom & all the passions that go to ground, as it were, in the garden.

The garden itself may induce lust, avarice, envy, gluttony and probably all the other deadly sins.

I have certainly known otherwise honest people driven to theft when tempted beyond endurance with rare plants, though most gardeners early learn generosity and reciprocity; we are, in anything, too eager to share our treasures.

My experiences of anger, that deadly sin, have often centered upon the destruction of some fine green plant or little garden to make way for a parking lot, a condominium, or a large sign. I would rather read the seasons in leaf & bloom than the most informative of signs; since I don't drive I would far rather walk through a rose garden

than a parking lot. Gardeners have strange priorities.

I have been thinking, however, of all the passions I have grounded in one or another of my gardens. Weeds are good for this. Happy the struggling gardener who has a corner of stinging nettles or a stretch of crabgrass, an invasion of bindweed or a field of thistles. In these plants you have constant companions. Instead of brooding upon grief, unrequited love, requited but dangerous love, rage, moral indignation or thwarted ambition you can spend an hour or two pulling up weeds. They will be there tomorrow too, but perhaps fewer in number. If your passions are strong, you and the weeds are well matched. Stinging nettles are a special case. They hurt; wear gloves. They are a great addition to compost piles. In my current gardens thistles are my companions & by far the easiest of the four different weeds; when I began my garden in the woods helpful folks told me I'd never defeat the thistles without some dread herbicide or another. Now I find only one or two, though the roadsides are thick with their beautiful flowers & silken parachuting seeds.

Now in full summer you can shear back your early flowering annuals—the alyssums & lobelias & such. If you can water them they will have another rush of bloom in late summer. If you keep flowers picked & watered they will keep blooming. The exception to this is the flowers, like lilies, that spring from bulbs. They will produce their one beautiful scape of bloom & no more, whether you pick them or not. You do want to remove the spent flowers to prevent the plant expending energy on seed formation. If you pick lilies (& who can resist?) be certain to leave as much foliage as possible so the bulb can store up food & continue to give you flowers in years to come.



Whether you do this midsummer, tending in love or fury is up to you; as for me, I am reduced by the tenderness of the flower to an equal tenderness of spirit.

If you need more energetic exorcism of passions, remember the compost pile. It is always better for energetic turning, which involves plunging your shovel into the heart of your mass of kitchen waste, leafmold, weeds, soil, wood ash, etc., and bringing the center of the pile to the outside; the air thus incorporated helps the compost break down

more quickly. If you don't have a compost pile by all means make one. It is as simple as layered lasagna in a pan; you want a carbon/nitrogen ration of perhaps 4 to 1 (dry material—usually nitrogen rich); I always cover the new pile with a layer of dirt or ripe compost. It seems more attractive thus, and breaks down ever so often.

As you work on it, you can reflect on the alchemy of discards, leftovers, shreds and broken bits turned to treasure. It could happen in your soul as well.

~Kathy Epling



What's the Difference?

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*I meditate beside black and white herons, pondering barbed wire.
Beneath a bossy billboard, your average 'All American Pimp' kind of scene,
Dumbed-down-chem-engorged cows, scream to protect what's left of
Their young girls, saddened, attempting to understand what's just happened,
Raped mothers, kidnapped brothers become utter slaves, or veil-soldiers for torture.*

*Welcome to America, where lead-laced fluoride flows,
Where boys prescribe to patriarchy, to fight to hope,
Numb out to consume rebranded slavery on your average filth ridden couch,
Misguided men, reversed discrimination, victims of rape-culture, conforming hardcore.
When the man speaks, or some regurgitation of this ancient inhumane philosophy,
My womb groans "give up!" Frail reproductive options, so paralyzing,
Like falling old-growth clear-cuts, humans can't see to hear my screams,
With All-merican' pussy-grabbing homogenization pasteurized as progress.*



What's the difference?

*Dairy cow to human,
Slumlords, to starving women and children,
Slave to sharecropper, prostitute to pimp,
Citizen puppets to corruptible constructs?
Gangsters, Banksters, thieves of commons,
Brietbart, ICE, Alq-CIA-da, sleeper gun men,
False flags, FOX news, ISIS, US government,
Big pharma, Koch bros, military arm for globalization.
No means No time for negotiating!*

*I am a refugee, born to concrete, the foundation of another's hegemony;
I own nothing, but the daunting cost of a moment to create freely,
Instead spent on my knees begging on high,
Please forgive my femininity oh transcendental-white-male deity,
Must I always be a bootlegger? Just to be? Just to eat? I never could sleep,
With waking hours spent inside flesh quantified
Yet everywhere I glance, this seems, my only means to survive.
I feel forced to play dumb, I feel like a fucking alien
How is no one noticing the necessity for cooperation?
That with unnecessary competition, we play survival to extinction.*

~Shakti