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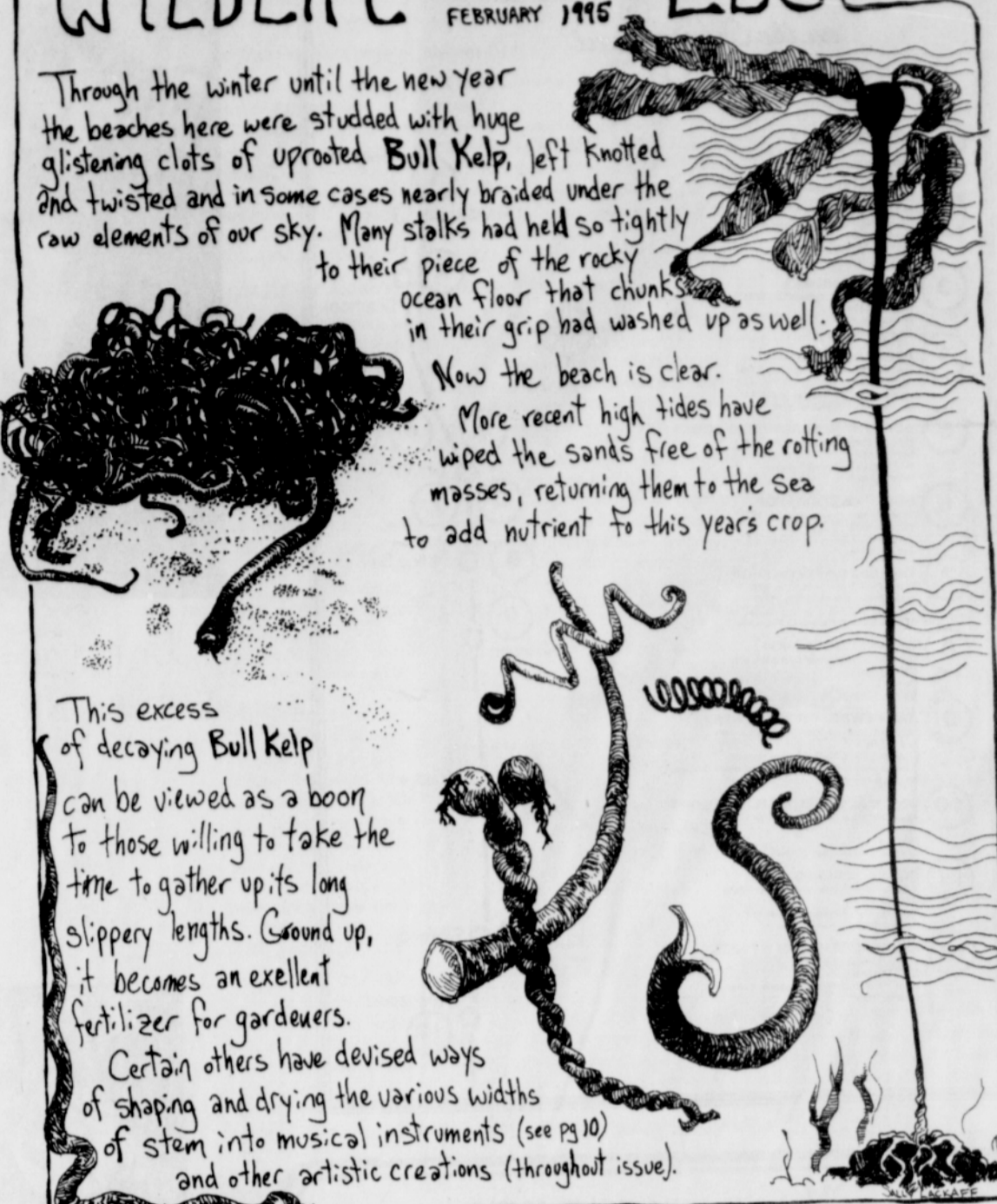
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WILDLIFE ON THE EDGE

FEBRUARY 1995



Through the winter until the new year the beaches here were studded with huge glistening clots of uprooted Bull Kelp, left knotted and twisted and in some cases nearly braided under the raw elements of our sky. Many stalks had held so tightly to their piece of the rocky ocean floor that chunks in their grip had washed up as well.

Now the beach is clear. More recent high tides have wiped the sands free of the rotting masses, returning them to the sea to add nutrient to this year's crop.

This excess of decaying Bull Kelp can be viewed as a boon to those willing to take the time to gather up its long slippery lengths. Ground up, it becomes an excellent fertilizer for gardeners. Certain others have devised ways of shaping and drying the various widths of stem into musical instruments (see pg 10) and other artistic creations (throughout issue).

JUNE'S GARDEN

A common denominator that threads through most stories I've read of why people become avid gardeners is that someone inspired them at an early age to be observant of nature and its beauty.

My grandmother was my teacher. She would take me on field trips to Multnomah Falls and Crown Point to see the wildflowers that bloomed there in the spring or we'd visit other rivers and streams around the Portland area where ferns and moss and flowers that loved water grew. If she wasn't familiar of some of the plants or birds we saw, she would take out her sketch pad and draw them in detail to later research their identification.

Unfortunately I do not have any of those sketches, but she did leave me with the legacy to be observant and curious of nature and its beauty.

I did become an avid gardener, if that means:

a person who constantly searches for new plants to add to an already full garden, sometimes digging into a bulb planted last fall; and cannot bear to pull out flowers that have seeded in unplanned areas,

or passionately enjoys the quiet hours spent weeding or watching the visiting hummingbirds zoom through the garden then hover to feed from a flower full of nectar.

My grandmother also taught me my "savings instinct". Her favorite saying was "Waste not, want not". I think she invented the words "To recycle".

My garden shed sometimes doesn't have room for shovels, rakes, and other tools. It's full of pruned branches saved to hold up tall flowers, jars and baskets of collected seeds crowd its shelves with dried flowers and weeds for a winter bouquet. Numerous sized plastic and clay pots, watering cans, a hose I never could coil, and two old canvas chairs that need new seats.

What are your stories? Did someone inspire you to garden or explore the forest and our coastline? There are many people living near or in Cannon Beach who have dedicated their time and knowledge to help others learn about our environment.

The books I've found helpful to identify the native plants and birds are;

- Coastal Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest by Elizabeth L. Horn.
- The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Wildflowers.
- Peterson Field Guides of Western Birds.
- Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds, Western Region.

An enjoyable pastime with your children on a winter day is to start a window-sill garden together. Try growing a sweet potato vine. Select a potatoe that has many eyes. Place it upright in a clear glass container half filled with water. Every other day or so refill the glass with fresh water. Soon the potatoe's eyes will sprout and grow a vine.

Avocado pits can be started the same way. Peel off the outer hard skin from the pit. Place the narrow end in a position to be held out of the water. Insert toothpicks to balance it on the rim of the glass, leaving the bulbous end in water. Out of the narrow end a stem will grow. When the stem produces four leaves or more, plant it in a pot of soil. Be sure and place the plant in a window with plenty of light.

Any cut off tops of root vegetables will grow new leaves if placed in a shallow dish of water.

In Astoria there used to be a Scandinavian shop and restaurant. One winter day a friend and I stopped there for lunch. On the window-sill a pot of snowdrops were blooming. The owner of the restaurant had planted the bulbs in a cup of dirt and enclosed them in a clear plastic bag tied at the top with ribbon. The tied plastic bag acted like a small greenhouse. She explained that she had only slightly dampened the soil before tying it shut. No more water had been added. What a treat to see those flowers on that winter day.

Question: Do you plant your edible peas or sweet peas in February?

Answer: No, I wait until the end of March or into April to plant the peas in the ground. Our continuance of rain can rot the peas if planted too early. Because we have more moisture in the coastal air and cooler summers, the edible peas will produce pods through the summer season and sweet peas sometimes continue to bloom until late fall. Add compost and fertilizer to the soil; peas are heavy feeders. Provide a sturdy supporting trellis to tie the pea vines securely as we have strong summer winds.


Question: How do you say the name of the pink blooming shrub I saw all over Cannon Beach last summer? Lavatory-ia? Signed Pat.

Answer: No, Pat, it's Lavatera, and the pressed flower you sent for me to identify is Godetia, not Gotcha!

Please send your gardening experiences, comments, or questions about coastal gardening to:

June's Garden
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