

JUNE'S GARDEN

VILLAGE OF FLOWERS
(conclusion)

Last summer in a small garden identified by a sign as "Tommy's Garden," a lone sunflower had grown to almost eight feet tall. The blossom was about the size of a dinner plate. I later found out Tommy is a young boy and that his mother had helped him plant his first garden. This year she said she gave him a packet of carrot seeds as he was anxious to plant another garden. Laughing, she added, "Carrots aren't his favorite food. I'm hoping if he grew some he also might like them better."

Helping a child to start a garden and to become aware of the surrounding nature, plants, birds, etc. seems to be the common denominator that has led many people to become avid gardeners. Several of the gardeners I interviewed for this series and asked, "When did you become interested in gardening?" answered that they gave credit to having been introduced to gardening as a child by someone in their family.

Gardening is also healthy. Quoting an article that appeared in the magazine *Prevention* by writer Denise Foley, titled "Dig In and Get Fit," "Gardening builds muscles, reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, fosters creativity, provides optimism, burns 340 calories an hour, warms the soul and puts flowers and food on the table."

The ladies visiting here from Kansas who were so impressed with the abundance of flowers asked me, "Do you live here? What a beautiful town! Does everyone garden?" Because of Foley's statement, in answering I'd add, "Gardening does warm our souls and we are especially optimistic as each spring we plant more even after experiencing cold stormy winters."

Recently I was introduced to weathergrams. Weathergrams are small strips of paper with single lines of poetry inspired by nature, written with waterproof India ink. The strips are hung on the branches of trees or shrubs in the garden. The concept was taken from the Orient, where strips of paper are hung in Shinto shrines or in their gardens. In the Orient some have no writing at all, so when the strips of paper flutter in the breeze the motion is meant to suggest that one pause and observe. Others may have a prayer or simple statement without elaboration such as Haiku poetry.

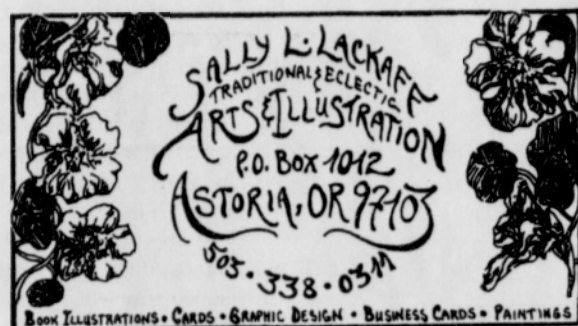
The one I received to hang on a branch of a pine tree in my garden is made of heavy brown paper. Written in calligraphy, it says, "If you carry flowers butterflies may follow your footsteps."

If a weathergram was made for all the gardeners and gardens in this series "Village of Flowers," it might read, "If you create a garden the whole world may find the path to your door."

My favorite line, however, is not Haiku, nor would it be appropriate for a weathergram, but came from a self-described 'Old Timer.' When I asked him, "What would you call a beach garden?" his answer was, "Throw out a bunch of nasturtium seeds around a piece of driftwood you've gathered from the beach. That's a beach garden."

Even though most of the gardens in our town do not resemble what he described, if all you plant are nasturtiums that thrive in our damp coastal environment, there is nothing prettier nor brighter in color than a garden that overflows with nasturtiums.

Nature also sows a garden that covers the clear-cut hills that surround Cannon Beach with pink blossoms of foxglove in the month of June. Whether seeds are planted by humans or sown by the winds, during the summer months our small coastal town glows with all colors of flowers that are planted in an informal style.



This winter has been difficult, vexing, protracted, troubling. I find myself unseasonably cold inside and dis-spirited. Last Friday morning my friend Meadow approached me and asked if I would accompany a group of families who planned to walk into Short Sands Beach.

"We feel the need to reclaim the park for ourselves," she told me.

At 9:00 a.m. Saturday morning, a sizable assemblage gathered quietly in the parking lot, mothers, fathers, grandparents, children. In the soft rain that morning we moved toward the trail, pausing several moments at a kiosk garlanded with flowers and remembrance messages. Barbara Temple-Ayres ignited a bundle of sage she had placed in a small brass censer. Smoke mingled with our breath and voices, drifting into dark stands of ancient cedar and spruce. We walked together loosely, free to engage in our own thoughts, yet collected and unified in purpose. In a very short time we reached the beach and rested together.

It was a small thing, really, a handful of moments, a mist of tears, a loose quilt of memories. I was very moved, though, and have thought of it many times in the ensuing days.

Far too frequently we seem called upon to sanctify broken ground, heal shattered spirits, cleanse the sullied earth. I feel tired sometimes, disappointed and confused. I also sensed, that morning, the power we possess, collectively, to transfigure a world vitiated and often dark. Often, though, small actions, right-hearted, peaceful, grounded in kindness and sympathy for our fellow man have substantial impact, sweeping and pervasive.

I think it may be time, even past time, to reclaim other things we have lost: a sensitive and compassionate bond with our children, unity with the natural world, a link with our history and traditions. Each of us possesses a unique voice; collectively we're a choir, jubilant and strong. I have always been proud of my village and its special qualities. We will persevere and prevail.

(The above is Professor Lindsey's reaction to the shooting of two park rangers at Oswald West State Park last month. ed.)



There is a certain Buddhist calm that comes from having money in the bank. Tom Robbins



The difference between intelligence and education is this; intelligence will make you a good living.
Charles Kettering