

# JUNE'S GARDEN

In Celebration of the New Millennium

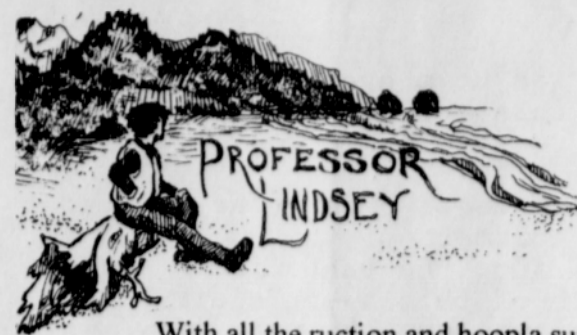
Last spring I found a sapling, only a few inches tall, growing amongst the daffodils. When the buds formed leaves I realized it was an apple tree. Each fall I spread the decayed organic matter that comes from the compost pile throughout the garden which helps to protect the plants during the winter and adds nutrients. I remembered a vast amount of apple peelings I'd added to the compost the year before. The peelings had come from a box of apples a friend had gathered from a Gravenstein apple tree that had been planted over 50 years ago in the Willamette valley.

By fall the sapling had grown to a foot tall. When I made plans for this year's garden in my new 2000 year garden calendar, I noted the date I'd found the small tree in the spring of 1999.

I thought what better way to celebrate the beginning of the new century than to leave this sapling to grow amongst the daffodils.



"Do, or do not. There is no 'try'."  
- Yoda (The Empire Strikes Back)



With all the ruction and hoopla surrounding the coming of the second millenium, I guess your Professor is obligated to make some comment regarding the event. If I were a Berber tribesman or a Chinese peasant, it might just wash by without much effect. Like it or no, those of us of Western European descent, steeped in the Judeo-Christian Tradition, must give a nod to its arrival.

I've always been slightly unsettled about the notion of time. Kalpas, epochs, aeons, centuries, mandalas, ages, years, periods, hours, minutes, light-years, what's a soul to make of it all? Perhaps I should be amped up and quivering in every fiber of my being, poised to take the first footsteps into a new world, a peaceful and harmonious place unlike the old, a snake shedding its skin like the world serpent or the Phoenix rising from a charred plain. Somehow I find myself skeptical and dubious. The publicity surrounding the event smells vaguely like the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, a jingoist event orchestrated by the inheritors of the Disney World Dream.

We Westerners like measurements and order. We cipher and tally up minutes and hours like drudge bean counters, shifting beads on the abacus of our lives. Our very notion of "time," supposes linearity, a continuum with a vector either forward or back. We have a "past," a sentimental time giving shape to our "present," and a "future," which is implicitly better and more promising in our cultural vision. Time is like a long straight highway vanishing into the nether. We climb onto the tarmac, journey stumblingly down the road for a life span, then crumple corporeally into the ditch.

Other world folks see endlessly recurring and repetitive cycles, rolling over infinitely. Still others view existence as an enveloping constant or an ongoing present moment. Hell, I don't know what to think!

I do like to think of our concept of "time" as analagous to surveying or navigating. Confronted with a vast tract of natural world, we creatures began imposing artificial metes and bounds, making wilderness tenable, shaping the unknown to human size. Without an accurate chronograph, navigation becomes impossible. Without surveys, seas and landforms remain inchoate matter, amorphous and too grand for human scale.

I guess all this rumagging around is by way of saying I don't know quite what to do on this midnight of December 31st, in the Year of Our Lord, Nineteen Hundred and Ninety-Nine! If I were Chinese, this coming Year of the Dragon, commencing February 5th, would be the 4,698th year. No problem there. A nice fiery dragon would bode well for the next line of days.

Electronics, machinery, and Christianity have unsettled many among us. Stopping at the bank a few weeks ago, I encountered a disturbing circumstance. A pitiable elderly woman huddled in a bank cubicle, raving and sobbing. Television, doom-sayers, and news broadcasts had left her in a classic state of fear and trembling. The bank tellers couldn't still her fears.

"What will become of us!" she bleated.  
"You're lucky this doesn't happen often," I suggested to the young teller.

"Oh, but it does!" she told me, whispering. "This is the fifth or sixth time this month!"

Oh, dear, I thought to myself. So it's come to this!

My friend, John Dubé, told me he's established his own tradition. Every New Year's Eve he sits on his chopping block in the yard and contemplates life. I generally take a walk on the beach. That should serve this year as it has most others.

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- Goethe (1749-1832)

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"A witty saying proves nothing."  
- Voltaire (1694-1778)