

POETRY

Life Gardens

by Dr. Seena Axel, Delray Beach, FL

The Garden of my life
lies fertile...ready for planting.
The deep, dark roots
of unwanted crops & plants
pulled out over an
arduous decade.
Plowed, nurtured, watered
and ready to receive
the seeds of my creative spirit.

I breathe...eagerly...yet patiently
awaiting the passions of
my purpose as solo gardener
to manifest fully.
Fertile fields, kissed by the sun,
watered by heaven's rain of tears,
wait to be harvested.
The conscious, intentional "Yes!"
of my loving heart
leading the blossoming.

A Recipe for Sustenance

by Diane S. Morelli, Hampton Bays, NY

A loving dad is like a homemade granola bar.
Body and soul nutrition,
Concealed, in the appeal of a freshly-baked cookie.
Old-fashioned oats, reliably warm and mushy,
Oven toasts into caramelized crunch.
Peanut butter, smooth and energetic,
Embraces the nectar collected and mellowed by
buzzing bees.
When these come together,
With a splash of vanilla bean essence, and
A dash of salt crystals,
The mixture glistens with 24-karat luster.
Chopped nuts, dried fruits, chocolate chips,
coconut shreds,
Add pizzazz to a backdrop so golden.
Like the radiance of diamonds and rubies and
onyx and pearls in a king's crown.
Regal, worth looking up to.

Mighty Flora

by Diane S. Morelli, Hampton Bays, NY

Dandelions roar.
Tufts, blades so tough, cower to
King of the garden.

Wonders

by Rhonda Weiss, Leeds, NY

Where did you learn about beryl, peridot, and
corundum embedded in rocks
Were you like me, who haunted museums like the
American Museum of Natural History
And bought souvenir rock collections
And, then tried as hard as you could
to remember the rocks' names
Forgot them once the boxes were closed

Where did you learn about wood sorrel, purslane,
henbit, and edamame
Edible weeds that sprung from the Earth
and were good to eat
Did you shadow survivalists
Or accompany indigenous people
who communed with the Earth
Or did you frequent natural health food stores
Or plant in a community garden
When did you notice that the moon did not disappear
When sunlight hit the sky
And that the mountains remained after you
Turned the corner
And how did you find the wonders
Taste the wonders
See the wonders
That I missed along the way

On The Beach

Belmar, New Jersey

by Ginger Graziano, Asheville, NC

(First published in Sky Island Journal, Winter 2023)

That first morning, my brother Jim and I bike
tree-filled streets to buy jelly donuts and eat them
at the boardwalk. Sun glints off breakers
that rise like cobras, curl and crash on the beach.
Water as far as we can see. No apartments
to crowd the view. Gulls careen overhead.
Our barefoot toes sink into sand as waves
beckon. Deeper. Deeper.

When my aunts and grandfather arrive,
I retreat to my own attic bedroom.
Steamy. Privacy an unheard-of luxury.
Jim not snoring in the other bed.
None of his stinky underwear on the floor.

I strip to cool my sweaty skin. The mirror
reveals my naked hormone-flooded body.
At the window, salt breezes caress
my budding breasts. My emotions swirl
like the dark clouds building outside.

That night the wind moans. I race to the beach
as the sea crashes over the miniature golf game
on the boardwalk. Over ocean-side streets.
Over porches and driveways. Rain lashes my body,
whips hair into my eyes. My gut churns, shocked
by the menacing face that arose like a wraith
from noon's calm water.

Nightmares haunt me when we return
to our suffocating Bronx apartment. I thrash
in sleep as waves suck me down. I wake in a sweat,
night after night. The ocean no longer beyond me,
but inside.



It is difficult to get the news from poems, yet men die miserably everyday for lack of what is found there.

— From *Asphodel that Greeny Flower*