

I had seen Wodechuck there before. He would wait for all of us to leave, before coming out. I knew Wodechuck was his Cherokee name. I knew that most Eastern Woodland tribes (including the Cherokee) had a Wodechuck in their dances and stories. Grandmother Wodechuck was a wise elder who danced as teacher and model of wisdom for the tribe.

“ Good!” Wodechuck seemed to be speaking to me!

“You people are learning!”

“My people have been dancing since we got here!”

I drew closer, stopping my cart near her end of the bridge.

“Yeah” she continued in short, clipped phrases.

“Mother Earth speaking to you.”

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LOVE IS A GARDEN

By Margaret Aiseayew

Editor’s Note: This is one of our favorite articles. We repeat this article nearly every year during gardening season.

This week was explosive. My garden produced cucumbers, zucchini, yellow squash, potatoes and the first cherry tomatoes. I was overwhelmed and since I can’t share the fruits, I share the reflections.

I am not sure there is anything in this world to be learned that cannot be known through growing a garden. That work is required to do a life is a given, so you prepare the soil and plant the seeds. Then, as a first thing, is the dynamic of trust. You must trust the soil to render up its nutrients. You must trust the weather that it will not dish out more than the plants can bear, and that it will meet out enough of what they really need. Then there is the issue of patience. You must wait. But you also learn that patience is not idle. Unseeded growth must not be allowed to consume what you wish for your plants.



A garden is like going to church daily. The plants growing tall raise praises to the heavens. Evil is manifest in the garden when you are deterred from participation. That which distracts you may be a change of focus or it may simply be evil made manifest and attacking your intention. Mosquitoes so insidious as to blight your body and mind can make you feel akin to Job.

Unseeded growth seems related to unintended consequences. I am saddened to realize that seeds sewn through the ages by the wind and water will come up to overtake your intentions if there is no care or with a loss of focus. It makes the “news” nearly every day.

Sorrow is known in the loss of a whole crop. Obviously the rabbits needed the tender shoots of the beans more that I needed the beans. Joy is known in abundance. Timing is everything to both the comedian and the garden.

Forget your drivenness toward perfection. It just won't happen. You are not that much in control. Planting these seeds didn't make you God. You have dirt under your fingernails (those that aren't broken to the quick) that won't come out until you are dead.

Responsibility is sometimes overwhelming in the garden. Deciding which shoots to thin and which to leave. Not deciding condemns to marginality. Against your own sense of will, you must be obedient to the rain, sun, wind, and soil. Freedom is exhilarating as you watch fruit flourish.

Pride, covetousness, lust, anger, sloth, envy, and gluttony are all present in the garden, both within the gardener and among the plants.

When you dig the potatoes and deposit newborn rabbits to your bucket, your heart breaks. Guilt is there in many forms. You should have known a nest might be there. They did eat all the beans. Why were you in such a hurry? Will your touch result in a mother's permanent rejection?

Grace is abundant. Sometimes it happens. Sometimes it doesn't.

That work should make more than a living, it makes life, is obvious. Love is a garden. It must see all things, bear all things, believe all things, and hope all things. The kindness love requires may, most of all, be to you, the gardener. It is a way to understand all things.

STARLIGHT BURNS¹

By Robertson Work



¹ From Robertson Work, *Earthling Love* (Swannanoa, NC: Compassionate Civilization Press, 2020). Reprinted with permission.