

Tending the Garden...

Cultivating the Soul



In our last newsletter we wrote about wildness and that which is not tame. In this issue, our first issue exploring this year's theme, "Tending the Garden", our discussion moved towards more cultivated spaces – gardens: places of wildness + intention. The more we shared, the more we could see how gardens provided tangible examples of our stewardship of the earth and how we envision that responsibility. Gardening allows us a deeper connection with the cycles of creation as well as patience and gratitude. Metaphorically, cultivating a garden provides a useful way to meditate on our lives and our personal growth and healing. In many spiritual traditions, the garden is a sacred, meaningful space. In Christianity, the garden is used as a metaphor for the perfection and unity of creation. In Buddhist tradition gardens are places for reverence, reflection and meditation. In Islamic faith, a garden is a sacred place of peace and a paradise separate from a harsh outer environment.

What do we each grow in our gardens, and how? We may cultivate food, medicines, flowers and our souls. How do we tend fellow beings that inhabit our gardens – human, plant and animal? Do we celebrate the harvests resulting from our hard work, patience and perseverance? What seeds do we sow? Are our gardens in harmony with natural rhythms or controlled by toxins? Every garden reflects the gardener's intentions and their soul's desire.

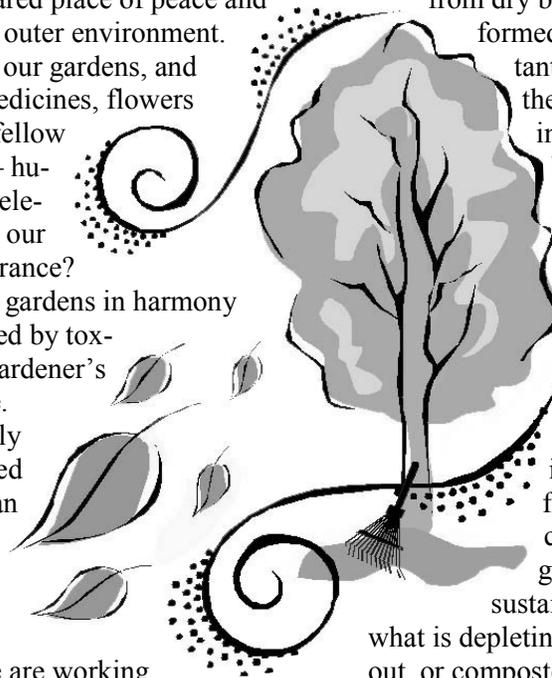
A garden is an intentionally chosen area where nature is tamed and tended. We may approach an overgrown spot and uproot living and dead material, or we may approach a barren area and add composted soil to replenish what is missing. In each case we are working with the intention of creating a living ecosystem that will grow through the seasons under our stewardship. Some gar-

deners barely alter nature's unruly wildness at all, simply carving out a quiet place to sit and revel amongst the wild roses and the grand diversity of plants, animals and insects. Other gardeners seem to want to eliminate almost all semblance of wildness, rigorously removing weeds and pruning plants into geometric forms. As gardeners and stewards of the earth, we must make difficult and responsible decisions about food production, sustainability of water and of soil, pest control and the frightening toxification of our Earth. What we do to our Earth, we do to ourselves and our souls.

As we tend a garden, we participate in the natural cycles of creation, death and rebirth. It is in the garden where we can witness the intersection of science and spirituality, and connect with our sense of wonder. In our own backyards we see Winter give way to Spring. Miraculously leaves burst from dry branches and tiny seeds produce fantastically

formed plants which love the rain and stretch exultantly towards the sun. Those same plants are the sacrificial food that we eat, or that die back into the Earth every Autumn, in a final celebratory blaze of orange, yellow and red. And let's not forget to give thanks to even the smallest insects for their essential role in creation. It takes a garden to remind us that we have Paradise within our grasp if we live with gratitude and intention.

In a garden tended with intention, we can learn about cultivating harmony with the Earth and with ourselves. Through gardening we can practice nurturance, sacrifice, faith in life/death/renewal, and acceptance of change. If we lovingly tend our own spiritual gardens, we begin to see what in our lives sustains us and feeds our souls. We can also sense what is depleting our "soil" that may be ready to be weeded out, or composted, making room for new growth.





Choosing to Change Behaviour

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Many of us have heard this simple concept yet we seem to have a problem following it. As a consumerist society, we are throwing away items at a high rate that leads to unacceptable amounts of garbage in landfills sites. The plastic toys that are a part of kids meals at fast food restaurants usually end up in the garbage within hours of purchase.

The Canadian government set a challenge to reduce the amount of waste going into landfill sites by 50% by the year 2000. Nova Scotia was the only province to achieve this goal. With the threat of another landfill site in the Halifax area, the community who lived or worked in and

around the metropolitan of Halifax were invited to have their voices heard to propose alternatives. The people shocked government officials because they decided to change their behaviour to stop the opening of a new landfill site. At the community's request, there were restrictions placed on what could be sent to landfill sites. They also discussed implementing a new organic division so that compostable materials would go directly back

into the earth. Nova Scotia's achievement has been recognized worldwide as officials from countries around the world travel to Nova Scotia to learn how they too can drastically decrease the amounts of garbage going to landfill sites. Nova Scotia has proven that a reduction of waste to landfill sites is possible.

The way to help our environment is to change the way we think as individuals and as a community. In our fast paced lives, we are unable to think about the repercussions of our actions. We throw things into the garbage without thinking whether there is a better way to dispose of the item, such as compost. We often buy things that are unnecessary and add to our garbage accumulation. We have lost our respect for the earth around us and we have to learn how to slow down and appreciate what we have been given to look after. We can start small; it has taken years to damage the earth so we cannot assume it can be repaired in a short period of time. This is a life-time commitment; do not let the feeling of hopelessness or powerlessness stop you from doing your part in cleaning up our earth.

For more on Nova Scotia's green achievements, visit:
www.gpiatlantic.org/clippings/mc_cameron_cangeo5-01.shtml
-Article by Cameron, Silver David. "Recycling by the Sea: Nova



On Our Shelves...

For this edition's fall column, we thought we would inform you of the **many** recommended titles we have added to our collection over the last year. With winter approaching and book club titles are being chosen, these titles are just waiting to be signed out...

Fiction

Lori Lansens- *The Girls*

Eve Ensler- *The Good Body*

Sandra Birdsell- *Children of the Day*

Hanan Al-shaykh- *Women of Sand and Mhyrr*

Jane Urquart- *A Map of Glass*

Margaret Atwood- *The Penelopiad*

Miriam Toews *A Complicated Kindness*

Octavia Bulter- *Kindred*

Donna Morrissey- *Downhill Chance*

Lorraine Anderson- *Sisters of the Earth*

Anita Diamant- *Good Harbor*

Tracy Chevalier- *The Lady and the Unicorn*

Margaret George- *Mary Called Magdalene*

Melinda Haynes- *Mother of Pearl*

Terry Tempest Williams- *Leap*

Joyce Carol Oates- *We Were the Mulvaneys*

Susan Vreeland- *The Forest Lover*

Non-Fiction:

Loree Boyd

Spirit Moves: The Story of Six Generations of Native Women

Nancy Goldberger, et al.

Knowledge, Difference, and Power: Essays Inspired by Women's Ways of Knowing

Holly Blue Hawkins

The Heart of the Circle: A Guide to Drumming

Theresa King

The Divine Mosaic: Women's Images of the Sacred Other

Patricia Monaghan

O Mother Sun! A New View of the Cosmic Feminine

Judith Plaskow

Standing Again At Sinai: Judaism From A Feminist Perspective

Wendy Hunter Roberts

Celebrating Her: Feminist Ritualizing Comes of Age

Phyllis Rose

The Norton Book of Women's Lives

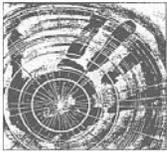
Thank You

A very warm "Thank You" goes out to **Lois Van Geel** for her time spent on the Planning Circle. Your unique contribution and energy was wonderful, Lois! All the best in the future.

The Circle would like to thank **Susan Getchell** for her wit & wisdom on our Editorial Circle.

We will miss your great talent for telling stories and weaving words whether in print or in our meetings. Thanks Susan!

Events at the Circle...



Open Circles...a tapestry of story, laughter, silence and the mystical experience of women gathered, where we can reflect the sacred in our lives. Last Wednesday of the month, Merici Lounge, Brescia UC, 7:30 p.m. Members: free Non-members: \$2.00
Everyone Welcome!

30 November
25 January
22 February

Unearthing Stories. Sharing books on women, nature and the earth.
Tending the Garden of our Souls...
Explore the Wisdom & Wonder of the Language of Movement, with Ann MacDougall

FALL EVENTS

More than Just a Book Sale



Sat. 26 November
10 am-3 pm

Mother St. James Auditorium, Brescia UC
Free Parking

Books, Live Harp Music, Fantastic Draws, Silent Auction, Baking & over 20 Local Artisans selling:

Jewellery, Photography, Pottery, Paintings, Clothing, Sculpture, Cards, Silk Bags, Art Tiles, Garden Goods, Knick Knacks, Journals, Wire Art, Pet Wear, Homemade Soap, Knitting, & the launch of The Circle's Exceptional Woman Pin 2006

Volunteers Needed!

Our *More Than Just a Book Sale* is our largest event. We are in great need of volunteers to help the day run smoothly. If you are interested in volunteering (even for a couple of hours) to set up on Friday (10am-4pm) OR at the sale Saturday (9am-4pm), please contact The Circle at 432-8353 x28288 or thecirclewomenscentre@gmail.com. We would be most grateful!

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Ritual of Re-Membering

Tuesday December 6th at Noon
Mother St. James Auditorium
Brescia University College
Free Parking

THE CIRCLE WOMEN'S CENTRE & BRESCHIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE PRESENT

THE Sophia SERIES

A SIX-PART SERIES OF LECTURES AND EVENTS
SEE BACK PAGE FOR DETAILS

...and Beyond

2-15 November - Celebrating Women, art exhibition & more honouring the pride, passion and perseverance of Canadian Women. Also included: art sale, internet safety seminars, Starting a Small Business as a Woman of Colour or Disability seminar, multicultural movies, etc. Organised by Single Women In Motherhood. For info: www.rbdesignsolutions.com/celebratingwomen/

9 November - Non-Violence as a Powerful Force with Len Desroches, 7pm, Wemple Student Lounge, King's. Presented by The Centre for Social Concern.

18 November - Wal-Mart: The High Cost of the Low Price movie screening, 6pm, UWU, University College, Room 84, free.

3 December - WomenSpiritSong Choir concert *Gifts of Winter*, Unitarian Fellowship of London, 557 Clarke Rd. W., 7:30 p.m. Tickets: \$10 at the door. Info: Eleanor Westgate, 652-5364

28 December- 4 January - Yoga & Nia in Costa Rica with Tamika & Juna. \$1638 (2-share room), incl. 7 nights accommodation, 17 meals, full programming, New Years celebration, etc. De-

tails at www.soultimeyoga.com. To register: Juna Geutter, 519-690-1479 or email soultime@execulink.com.

2006

6-8 January- Marion Woodman, Mary Hamilton, Ann Skinner, and Ann Yeoman - a non-residential wkshp at UofT based on Grimm's "The Nixie of the Mill Pond." Storytelling, lectures, discussion, playful voice & movement explore fairy tale motifs, Jungian psychology and dream images. Tuition & meals, \$350. Info: Mary Hamilton 519-433-2160. Register: Helen Lamontagne, 416-946-3088. Space is limited.

18 January - From Eve to Esther: How a Feminist Reading of the Bible Gives us Hope, lecture given by Rabbi Elyse M. Goldstein, 7:30pm, Elizabeth "Bessie" Labatt Hall, King's, free, info: 963-1476.

8 February- Deb Abbey, **Social Impact Investing**, social investing, focusing on leveraging capital for social change, Wemple Student Lounge, King's, 7pm, info: 433-3491 ext. 4380.

Principles & Practice...



cultivating harmony in the great Community of Life

Principles and Practice is a new column dedicated to highlighting women's efforts women to create change in the world. Whether it be individually or collectively, these are women dedicated to living their vision, putting their beliefs into action, their principles into practice...

Often when we think of 'Tending the Garden' images of earth and plant life leap to mind. But what about our human garden? How are we tending to the great diversity of human life, expression, spirituality, culture, health, etc...? Are we providing and being provided with the fertile soil within which we can grow to our full human potential?

Although many factors contribute to creating a healthy "soil" within which humanity can flourish, one of the most essential nutrients for positive growth is education. In today's society, this is especially true for the education of women. Numerous studies have shown that one of the most effective catalysts for social change, from a more prosperous economy to improved health, is the education of women and the girl-child. The women highlighted below are the catalysts for change in our community.

Combating Sexism through Education: The Miss G_ Project

Founded by four UWO students, Dilani Mohan, Sarah Ghabrial, Sheetal Rawal and Lara Shkordoff, The Miss G_ Project for Equity in Education aims at having Women's Studies courses implemented in Ontario high schools. The goal is to empower students with knowledge of gender and women's issues and give young women a voice to use in carving out their own places in history. The project gets its name from a 1873 study entitled *Sex in Education* in which Dr. Edward Clark of Harvard Medical School stated that Miss G_, a top student who died young, resulted in this end because her finite energy was spent on intellectual labour instead of being used for the development of the body, especially the reproductive system (so that she could "serve the race"). Bluntly put, she died because she was thinking too hard and her body couldn't sustain the effort. Miss G_ is also an example of the innumerable nameless women lost to a world history that only remembers the big players. There is a planned review of Ontario social science programs in 2006-2007, when hopefully women's studies will be incorporated into a stable part of the curriculum. To learn more or get involved visit: www.themissgproject.org.

Sisters of St. Joseph & Environmental Building: Educating by Example

The Sisters of St. Joseph's new residence combines environmental ideals with practical and fiscally responsible choices. The process has been one of collaboration, with the surrounding neighbourhoods who were welcomed to a community open house and have been regularly updated through the mail, and with local London groups including Habitat for Humanity who will be taking reusable building supplies from the two structures being demolished for the new residence and Thames Talbot Land Trust, who completed a three-season biological survey on the land to create a development strategy for managing natural features. The building is in accordance with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system developed by the Green

Building Council in the US and adapted for Canada, growing in popularity due to its combination of environmental goals combined with substantive savings. Some of the other features include insulated concrete forms, ground-source heat pump, argon-gas filled windows, rainwater cistern, dual flush toilets and drought resistant plants, to name just a few. The founders of this order talked about their 'dear neighbours', but these Sisters have reclaimed the term to include all beings and the earth.

Wisdom for a Changing World: The Sophia Series

The Circle Women's Centre and Brescia University College have collaborated to create *The Sophia Series*. It is a 6-part speaker and event series taking place throughout the 2005-2006 academic year that seeks to "respond with Wisdom, Justice and Compassion to a changing world." The series highlights the many aspects of women's wisdom, from the spiritual to the intellectual, the personal to the political. Remaining events are:

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Tuesday 6th December 2005 at Noon
Ritual of Re-Membering

Angela Merici Lecture

Tuesday 24th January 2006 at 7:30 p.m.

Diana Stano, Ph.D., President of Ursuline College
*Education as Transformative Process
for Societal and Cultural Change*

International Women's Day Lecture

Wednesday 8th March 2006 at 7:30 p.m.

Flora MacDonald

Social Activist, Politician and Feminist

Jeanne Adamson Memorial Event

Tuesday 9th May 2006 at 7:30 p.m.

Lori Lansens

A Reading and Discussion of her new book The Girls

"I watch the heavens and I find a calling/ Something I can do to change this moment" - Sarah McLachlan, *World On Fire*