

mutterhood

a community of thought one idea at a time



BLOOM

Spring 2019

welcome

Ah, that early summer feeling. Everywhere you look there's color: flowers bursting open; the natural canopies created by trees full of leaves; the yellow and orange of bees and butterflies that flit from bud to blossom in a slow dance set to the rhythm of a sunny afternoon.

This idea of renewal is what led us to *Bloom*, the theme of this issue of [mutterhood](#).

As we explored *Bloom*, we tried to balance words with pictures, but it's such a visual word that we finally decided, why fight nature? With so many beautiful images inside, we hope you agree that *Bloom* is a sight to behold.

But *Bloom* is much more than just a pretty picture. As the issue took shape, a theme emerged about biodiversity and sustainability, and the ripple effect of one seemingly small action on the bigger world. Our profile of a local environmentalist shows how connecting like-minded people can motivate others locally, nationally, even across the world.

The early blooms of spring may be gone, the daffodils long faded, but think of what replaces them: seeds waiting to take root under the surface. It's the metaphor of growth, repeated naturally in so many ways.

We hope you enjoy *Bloom*,

ellen & cathi





CONTENTS

how her garden grows6

plight of the bumblebee 16

love in blooms 18

an eye for beauty 22

planting the seeds of change 34

forever in bloom..... 42

late bloomers 48

behind the scenes 52

credits 53

one last thing 54

contact mutterhood 55

mutterhood

cathi kern borushek
Publisher/Creative Director

ellen fowler hummel
Publisher/Editorial Director

Unless otherwise indicated, all works represented here are the property and copyright of mutterhood, cathi kern borushek and ellen fowler hummel.

All rights reserved. 2019

the connector

HOW HER garden grows

Saima Abassi is as surprised as anyone that a childhood love of nature has blossomed into a passion for the environment that has her working with local organizations here and in her native Pakistan to create sustainable natural habitats.

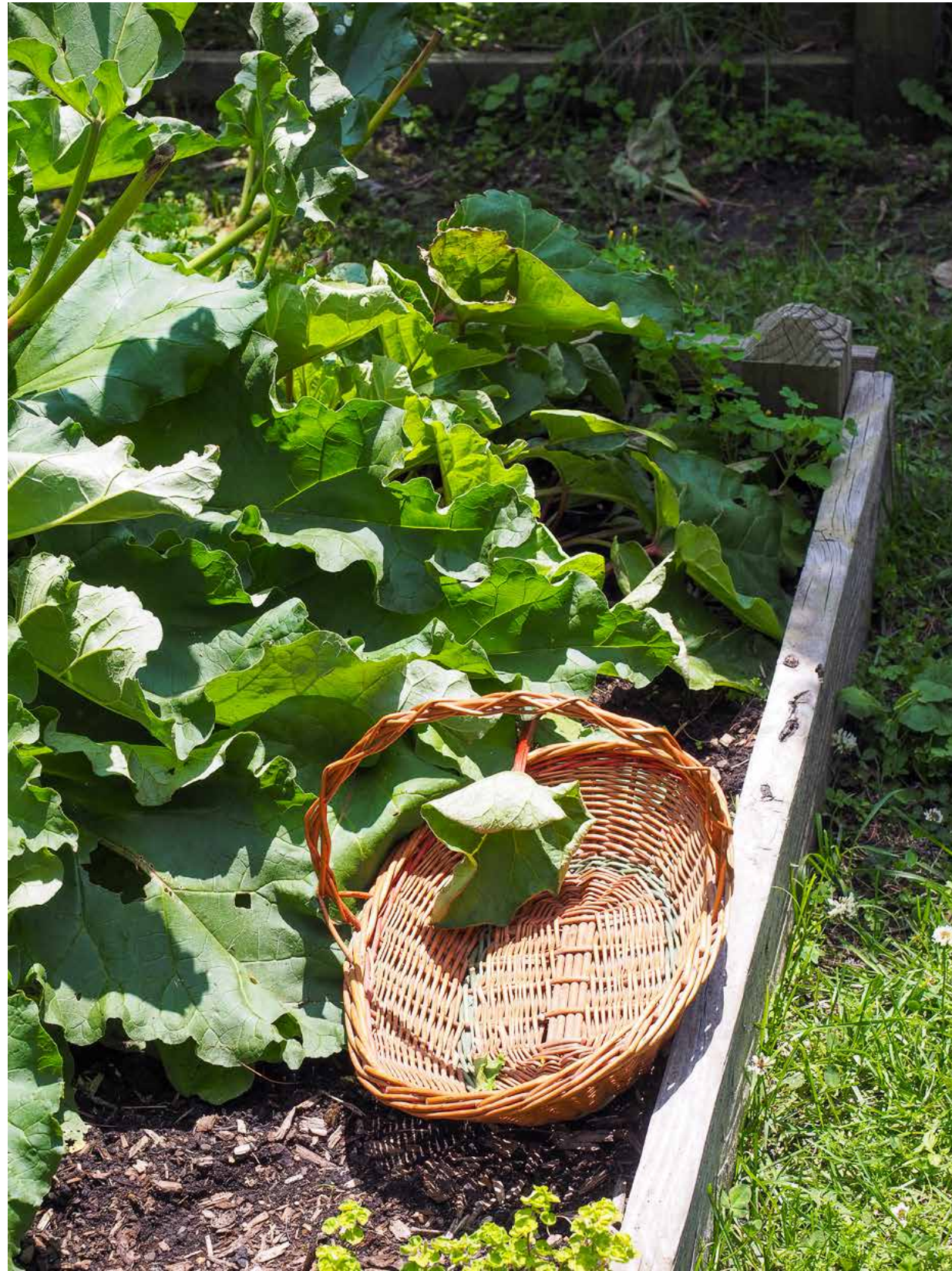
Walking through Saima Abassi's garden gate was like entering another world. It was the first really hot day of summer, after weeks of rain and definitely not summer-like temperatures. The first time we'd met was at the Chicago Botanic Gardens in late April, when the air was crisp and cool, and not much was blooming. It was different today, as Saima's garden burst with life — plants, flowers, bees and butterflies — that greeted the heat and sun as if they'd been waiting for it.

We met in her backyard, where her garden takes up approximately 20 square feet. Enclosed by a wooden fence trimmed with chicken wire to keep rabbits and other hungry pests at bay, the four rectangular raised planting beds hold herbs, salad greens, tomatoes and squash, sorrel, and chives topped with purple thistle-like flowers. Tomato stakes are inverted in the ground, creating trellises for plants to climb; at the entrance, a gate overhung with trumpet vine stood open, a small bell topped by a rooster attached at the side to announce your entrance, if you so desired.

The effect was charming, even more so after spending time with Saima, a self-described naturalist whose work in the two places she calls home — Lahore, Pakistan, where she grew up, and Wilmette, Ill., where she and her husband raised their children after moving to the United States — demonstrates the power that community can have on creating environmental awareness.



Saima Abassi enters her charming backyard garden, eager to inspect the day's harvest.



Scenes from a garden.

“Where you live is the first place you have to put your energies,” Saima says, when asked about her grassroots efforts. “I love nature, I like connecting people to nature, and I realized quickly that I’m not the only one interested in these things.”

Gardens are a theme in Saima Abasi’s life, where they serve as a source of inspiration for her evolution as what she calls an “environmentally conscious person.”

Growing up in Lahore, Saima connected to nature through her father, who regularly took his family to spend time at their farm in the foothills of the Hindu Kush mountains, in northern Pakistan. There, they watched sheep and goats, hiked the trails, saw lush vegetation and crops, and immersed themselves in an environment very different from their everyday urban surroundings.

In 1989 Saima and her husband moved to Chicago — in January, no less, with snow on the ground.

“It was so, so cold,” she laughs. “I didn’t grow up with snow, and it looked so amazing. I loved it.”

They set down roots in Wilmette, in the city’s northern suburbs, and began raising their three children. In 2006 the family returned to Lahore for four years, after which they moved back to Wilmette. It was during that time in Pakistan that Saima recognized her growing environmental sensibility.

“The Lahore I left in 1989 was rapidly changing,” she says. “I grew up with an awareness of not wasting things, which I didn’t see as much in the States. But this time in Lahore, I didn’t see a lot of environmental concern. There was so much pollution in the air you could see it, and I thought, this is terrible.”

Back in Wilmette, Saima volunteered as the PTA’s recycling point person at her children’s elementary school but she credits the first lighting bolt moment that changed how she thought about nature to a morning in 2013, when she visited a friend.



“We were having tea in her kitchen, which overlooked her backyard,” Saima says. “She had a vegetable garden that was surrounded by twig fencing she’d made herself, and it looked just like a fairy garden. I was so inspired.”

Having never gardened growing up, nor having had any interest in doing so, Saima surprised herself when she asked her friend for a tour. They went outside, and her friend told her about the vegetables she was growing, and the process of composting. Saima went home and started researching on her own, learning about sustainability, biodiversity and environmental groups in town, notably Go Green Wilmette, a

local organization started in 2006. (*For more on Go Green Wilmette, see page 13.*)

“Right away, I felt a total sense of connection,” she says of the group, which she praises for bringing together like-minded citizens with an interest in the environment. Saima joined the organization in 2013 and the board soon after, helping to create programming and other initiatives.

“It’s so good to see people trying to make a difference in earnest every day,” Saima says. “With this group, I feel like I’m never alone. We’re all invested in the same thing.”

With her feet planted firmly in the local environmental community, Saima’s efforts to educate others began to grow.

“Oh my goodness, it’s a blue heron!”

We’re sitting on the deck of the cafe at the Chicago Botanic Garden, talking about gardening. Saima’s enthusiastic about what she’s learned and very quick to credit others’ work more than her own, but it’s hard for her to finish a thought before she gets distracted, pointing to a lush clump of prairie grass, or a giant blue



The pond at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

heron taking flight from the nearby pond.

Her enthusiasm is contagious, and we stop our conversation to watch the bird spread its wings, flapping slowly to gain momentum as it glides low along the surface of the water. She returns to the topic at hand: the sustainable yard tours she helps to organize for Go Green Wilmette.

The idea came to her in 2013 after that first visit to her friend’s vegetable garden. Saima thought two things after leaving the house that morning: one, that if she’s interested in gardening, then most likely other people would be too; and two, that showing people how their neighbors garden might inspire them to try it as well.

“When someone has a private garden in your town, that makes it doable,” Saima says. “People start to think, maybe I can start something too.”

In its first year (2013), the sustainable yard tour visited six gardens that were chosen to present a variety of designs and components: native plants and pollinator habitats; rain and stormwater management; composting; and edibles. The hosts gave presentations

about their garden, from design to sharing tips and techniques.

“Every yard host was so generous,” Saima says. “They were so excited that so many people are interested in what they were doing.”

The tour was a hit. In all, Go Green Wilmette has featured 37 gardens and attracted 800 visitors. In 2018 alone, more than 300 people took part, with the tour lasting far longer than the two hours allotted. This year, they feature eight gardens on a longer tour.

It’s the passion of everyone involved that Saima admires.

“A garden is a canvas and it’s the gardeners’ choice how they paint it,” she says. “Their garden creates a unique piece of art, and like all creations, they’re never done with it.”

It was a Facebook post about another friend’s backyard that led to Saima’s next big idea.

“One morning a friend posted about a fragrant tree in her backyard, and asked if anyone knew what it was,” she says. “The tree was linden, which infuses the neighborhood with a sweet, beautiful fragrance. So many people commented on it that I thought if people are interested in this, why not do something for them?”

Her idea: a tree walk, modeled after the successful sustainable yard tours.

Since she knew little about trees, Saima set to work learning as much as she could to lead the first tour in 2013.

“I took a tree-helpers course for open lands. I bought books. I recruited people to help, and it was as if the universe was helping me. In our first year, more than 70 people showed up. We were so surprised.”

Like the yard tour, interest in the tree walk continues to grow. In 2018, more than 100 people showed up to hear Lydia Scott, the director of the Chicago Region Trees Initiative at the Morton Arboretum, lead the walk. Enlisting the participation and support of experts like Scott is one of Go Green Wilmette’s strategies to build awareness beyond the local area.

“We want every community to have their own sustainable yard and tree walks,” Saima says.



More than 100 people attended Go Green Wilmette’s 2018 Tree Walk, just one of the projects it sponsors that brings people closer to nature.

A 2016 newspaper headline about air pollution in her hometown of Lahore inspired Saima yet again, this time to model the success of Go Green groups in Wilmette and other areas to establish a similar effort there.

The group, Go Green Lahore (GGL), is a grassroots community organization whose mission is to raise environmental awareness, specifically to reduce air pollution by planting trees. The initiative is three-fold: reduce air pollution by reducing the use of plastic bags, which people burn along with trash; focus on education, with group members giving talks to school children and other interested groups about sustainability and planting native trees; and action. This last goal is where Saima sees the most results, with small steps already leading to change.

“Big goals make people disheartened and paralyzed,” she explains. “Baby steps are achievable.”

Case in point: reusable tote bags. Go Green Lahore had canvas tote bags made for volunteers to give out to school groups, at shops and at local community events to encourage people to ditch plastic bags for reusable ones. They sought out local community groups to talk to about native trees, and Saima herself has given presentations



Tote bags designed by GGL to reduce the use of plastics.

when she returns to visit family.

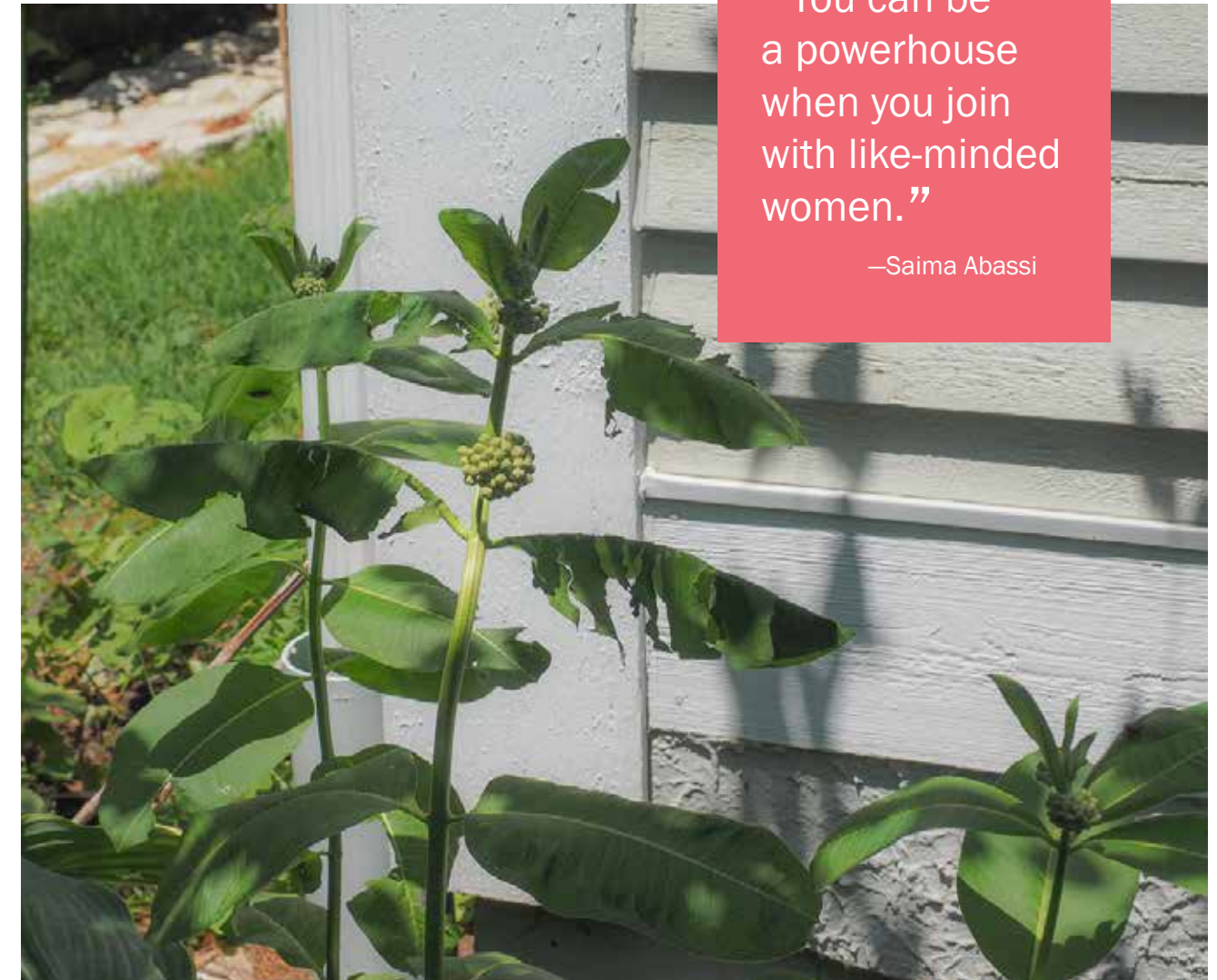
The GGL board, which now consist of 14 members, recently announced a corporate sponsorship that will enable GGL to establish a small tree plantation outside Lahore, and fund it for three years. And with the Pakistan government’s recent initiative to plant 1 billion trees in Lahore, GGL is in the process of registering with the Pakistan government as a non-governmental organization in order to participate.

It’s a lot of progress in a not very long period of time, and Saima couldn’t be happier with the direction GGL is taking.

“When women with skills get so invested in a cause, there’s no reason they can’t be successful,” she says.

On a personal level, the connection to Go Green Lahore has brought Saima even closer with her sister Zara, who is actively involved with GGL.

“She found my passion and now it’s hers as well,” Saima says. “She’s getting her master’s degree in environmental science, and that makes me very happy. To be connected to my sister on that level, that’s very big for me personally.”



Milkweed, a plant native to Illinois, is easy to plant and attracts Monarch butterflies.

“You can be a powerhouse when you join with like-minded women.”

—Saima Abassi

GO GREEN

Go Green Wilmette was founded in 2006 with three goals in mind: to raise environmental awareness; to inspire action; and to create a more sustainable community. It’s a true grassroots organization that works closely with local government, schools, the park district and public library, local businesses and nearby communities to achieve its mission. Of particular importance is its outreach to residents through Going Green Matters, the annual environmental fair; tree walks and yard tours; partnerships with local school gardens; and other programs. The group also provides resources and information on a range of environmental topics, from how-tos on sustainable gardening to advocating on environmental policy issues. As the first organization of its kind in the northern suburbs of Chicago, Go Green Wilmette has been used as a model for similar organizations in neighboring communities and in Lahore, Pakistan. For more information, visit GoGreenWilmette.org.



Kale, growing to seed in Saima Abassi's garden.

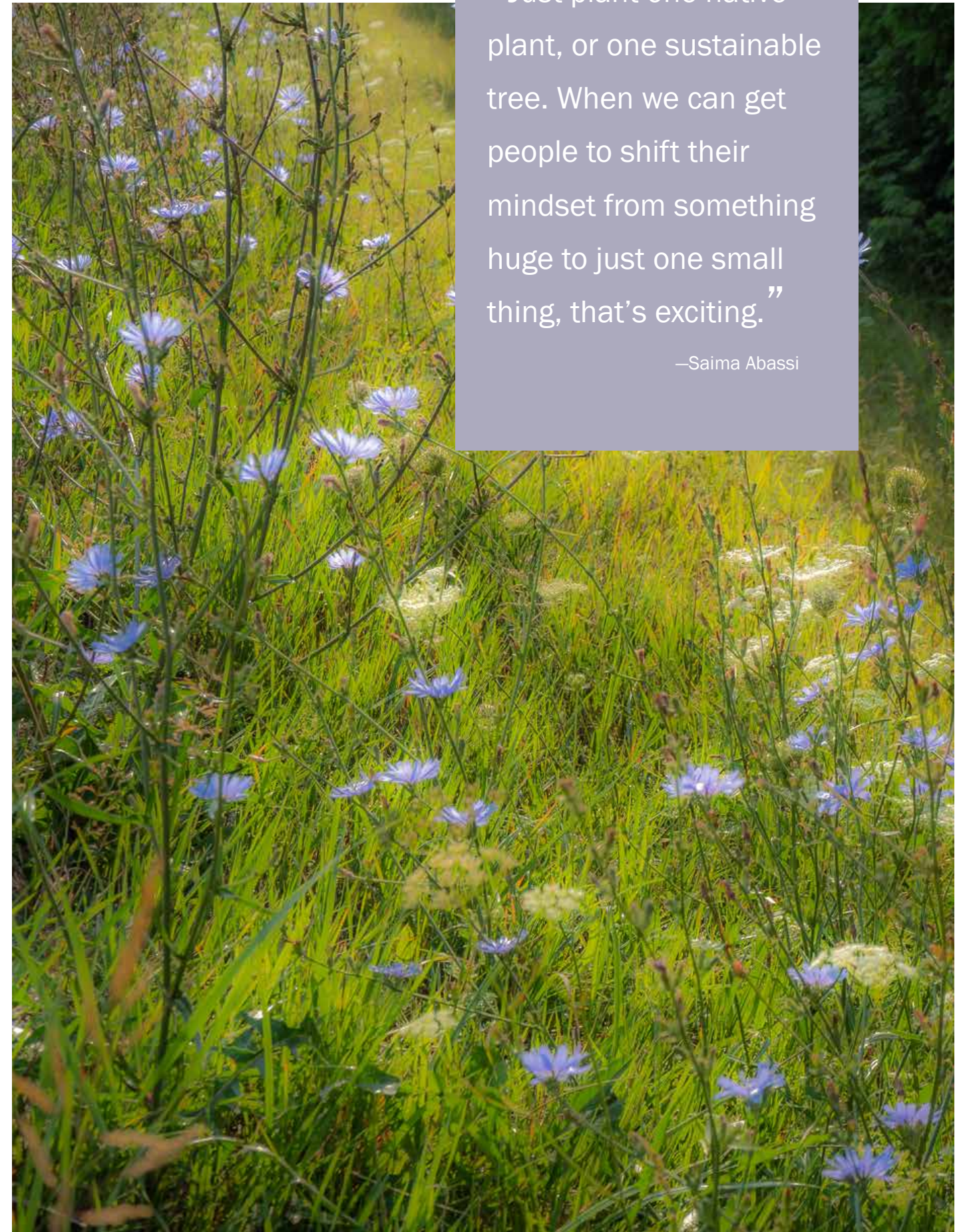
Back in her own garden, Saima wanders the rows, pointing out nasturtiums, tomatillo plants and kale, which she's allowing to grow to seed this year in part to see what will happen with the plants that are now almost four feet high. We walk over to the compost bin, and she grabs a pitchfork to turn the contents, explaining how it's important to do so in order to keep flies away. We peer inside, looking for worms. "It might be too early for them," she says.

We walk into the front yard to see the milkweed plants that she lets grow wild in her hedges because they attract monarch butterflies. She points to the broad green leaves, explaining how the monarchs lay their eggs on them, and then as caterpillars eat them for food. Milkweed plants are native plants, one of the species that Saima recommends people put in their yards as a first step to doing something good for the environment.

She has to leave soon, to lead a tour of native plants at the Chicago Botanic Garden, where she volunteers as a docent a few times a week. Her passion for nature is infectious (even I went out and bought a milkweed plant) but it's something she is equally grateful to others for encouraging in her — especially women.

"I feel like this work and the people I've found are leading me to achieve, to reach my higher self," Saima says. "Women are connectors, it's in our DNA. It just needs to be tapped in a way to bring it out".

— *efh*



"Just plant one native plant, or one sustainable tree. When we can get people to shift their mindset from something huge to just one small thing, that's exciting."

—Saima Abassi

the plight of the bumblebee

*In the matriarchal
bee world, queens
rule the roost.*

Want to save the world? Mind your bees — and birds, butterflies, bats, beetles, and bugs. These pollinators (along with flies and moths) are responsible for 90 percent of the world's food. But the queen of the pollinators? Bees.

BEE BASICS

Presiding over an increasingly fragile ecosystem, bees are the workhorses of the plant kingdom, necessary for an estimated one out of every three bites of food you eat.

Worker bees (female) and drones (male) live in colonies presided over by a queen bee. The drone's only job is to mate with the queen. Worker bees clean the hive, gather the pollen and nectar, bring food back to the hive and take care of the offspring.

Female bees are also in charge of enforcement. They're the only ones with stingers.

When winter is coming, it's good to be queen. The worker bees and drones die, while the queen bee nests.

Bumblebees buzz pollinate by using wings that beat 130 times per second to shake the flower into releasing pollen. This technique leads to higher fruit yields, making bumblebees attractive to commercial planters. For example, bumblebees are the exclusive pollinator for greenhouse tomatoes.

THE BAD NEWS

Unfortunately, the bee population is in trouble. The worrying, worldwide decline in the pollinator population is attributed to mostly man-made factors, including pesticides, air pollution, climate change, and destruction of their habitats through urbanization. In 2015 alone, 42 percent of all bee colonies in the United States collapsed.

THE GOOD NEWS

You can help beef up the bee population:

- Plant for pollinators – use window boxes, planters and yards to grow native plants, especially wildflowers, that bloom continuously from early spring through fall.
- Put down the pesticides – use care in spreading chemicals to keep your garden growing by reducing or eliminating them.
- Till carefully – in the spring, mow at the tallest setting and wait to till your garden. Bees build their nests close to the ground and often use fallen branches and dirt patches as their homes.
- Buy locally – support beekeepers by buying honey and other bee-based products made near you.

love in blooms



"Love is the flower you've got to let grow"

John Lennon

As a woman I have been conditioned not to brag, but here goes: I can assemble Ikea furniture in under 12 hours and with only a few leftover parts. I can turn nearly anything into an Excel spreadsheet and I can answer more than 50 percent of the pink and brown Trivial Pursuit questions. I can program a simple remote if there isn't a millennial available. I make a mean gumbo. I know the perfect amount of throw pillows to put on our bed to annoy my husband.

I could go on, but you can see that through trial and error I have mastered many of the important qualities that make a fully-functioning adult human being. It was the same strategy I applied to affairs of the heart.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The first time I told a boy I liked him, he stabbed me in the leg with a No. 2 pencil.

We were in second grade, standing next to each other decorating little pots of marigolds as a Valentine's Day treat for our mothers. Caught up in the spirit of the day, I whispered "I like you" to my days-long crush, the new boy in school. I was assuming, incorrectly, that he would be flattered by this information.

Without turning his head, he grabbed the pencil from his shirt pocket and jabbed the lead just above my knee, poking a hole in my tights as he drove the point home. My eight-year-old mind was sure that it meant he liked me too.

Alas, our love was not meant to be.

Lessons learned: Marigolds are stupid and don't smell very good. Ditto for elementary school boys.

HIGH SCHOOL

In high school I ignored the context clues in front of me as I wasted senior year making heart eyes at a guy in our friend circle. To prove my undying devotion, I did all the things you would see in a teen angst movie: decorated his locker every week during football and hockey season; drove past his house like I was casing it; became friends with his younger sister for insider information; turned our school yearbook into an homage to his fabulousness. As the year dragged on without any heart eyes back, I reasoned he was too shy to respond to my incessant adoration.

Near the end of the year the truth clicked in when he presented a classmate with a bouquet of flowers and asked her to prom.

Lessons learned: High school sucked; he wasn't shy; I was a borderline stalker who needed to dial it way down; and flowers were a reliable sign someone *actually* liked you.

ADULTHOOD I

I had been dating my boyfriend for almost two years when, sick in bed with a raging case of strep throat, I heard the doorbell ring. On my front porch were two delivery men wrangling a ficus tree. What?

The card was from my boyfriend, hoping the lush ficus with its spindly trunks wrapped around each other like a hug, would brighten my sick day. Awwwww. Instead of flowers to cheer me up his gesture took two delivery men and a handcart. It was grander, bigger, permanent. It hinted at a future where we watched the tree grow. Together. He was the one, right? I mean, a tree! It was almost an engagement ring.

I read the ficus tree's care instructions thoughtfully. I watered and fed it as directed. I

made sure it got the right kind of light. Still, by summer the tree was obviously dying. It was dropping leaves like it was raining, their former lush green replaced with mottled yellow and brown. Our relationship? Same.

On trash day I dragged the ficus to the curb and watched as two men in a garbage truck took it away.

Stupid tree.

Lessons learned: A tree is just as pointless as a bouquet of flowers. And I was terrible at gardening.

ADULTHOOD II

The ficus had been gone about six months when Valentine's Day rolled around.

In our female-centric office expectations were high. I was still performing my 24-hour-a-day, one-woman-wronged show so I had zero interest in a day dedicated to romance. That didn't stop other dreams from coming true. Roses and similar bouquets d'amour were delivered throughout the day at an increasingly frenetic pace. Love was announced by the receptionist via loudspeaker: "Mary P., there's a delivery at the desk for you." "Amy T., there's a delivery at the desk for you."

By the end of the day both the receptionist and the loudspeaker were exhausted from their roles in Cupid's callings when, through the static, I heard my own name being announced. Huh?

The Valentine's Bouquet sender was a shock. We'd met in the office-building bar where groups from different companies merged to faux-complain/humblebrag about their jobs over bottles of Miller Lite and baskets of stale popcorn. When mutual friends started to date, we became part of a group. Our casual encounters consisted of bonding over a shared hatred of our exes



and trying to one-up each other with our tallies of injustices suffered at their hands. Was that flirting? I obviously didn't read the signs.

But flowers meant something, right? So, we spent the next few months hanging out, testing the waters, cautiously moving forward. Still, I wasn't fooled when he showed up with an apology bunch of daisies, dyed fake rainbow colors and wrapped in grocery store cellophane. Seems his ex wasn't so bad after all. Could we still be friends?

Next was the two dozen roses guy who, as it turned out, probably meant to send one of those bunches to the other girl he was dating. We had a nice chat about it when she called me at work to introduce herself.

Then there was the wildflower-bearing, motorcycle-riding bartender, just to get that cliché out of my system.

I spent a drunken evening at ficus tree's wedding. Yes, I went. Being the bigger person, I dialed back my revenge fantasies (slightly) and showed up as my best self (thanks to many beauty professionals and loads of credit card debt). Take that, ficus tree! I considered it a win when his mother pulled me aside to confess that she liked me better.

Then Valentine Bouquet-giver popped up as a feature on the local news. The only man at Filene's annual bridal sale, he was shown wrestling brides-to-be and their mothers to grab a \$100 dress for his fiancée. Without her. His

shining moment was when he whispered to the reporter "Shh . . . I want to surprise her. She doesn't know I'm here."

Random blind dates. Random setups. Dating. Ugh. So done.

Lessons learned: Dating is exhausting. Time to work on myself.

TRUE LOVE

I chose self-improvement in the form of a summer night class in desktop publishing. I arrived at the first class to find the rows of two-person computer tables were filled, save for one open seat in the back. The guy on the aisle shuffled over to make room for me, then introduced himself. The next week he waved me over to show me he had my computer ready to go. At the end of class he followed me to my car and suggested we discuss the homework over a drink.

Really bad at reading the room and still plenty gun shy, we hung out, staying firmly in the friend zone for the duration of the course. I assumed he had a girlfriend. Turns out he didn't. After the final, he swooped in and changed things. I didn't mind.

By Thanksgiving we were ready for family meets and greets. That night, as we're weaving our way in the dark to his family's house, I ran headfirst into a greenhouse window that jutted out from the wall. I face-planted so hard that little pots of herbs toppled from their shelves. Blood streaming from my nose, his doctor father examined my face and told me I'd be fine. Oh and hey, nice to meet you.

Not too long after that we were married at the local courthouse without fanfare. Or flowers.

Lessons learned: Love really *is* the flower you've got to let grow. I learned to be a better gardener. Thanks John Lennon.



©Kirsten Stadheim

the artists

an
eye
for
Beauty

"I paint flowers so they will not die." Frida Khalo

They say beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so we asked five talented photographers for their interpretations of the word *Bloom*.

For more on our talented artists see page 53.



©Amanda Nugent

Amanda Tuttle Nugent

My daughter and I were visiting my parents in late March, near Shenandoah National Park. We were walking with my mom and came upon a puddle of murky, oily water about seven inches deep.

It looked like a painting.

Submerged below the surface were big blooms of salamander eggs attached to two small sticks. The blooms were about the size of a small melon. I stood on a rock to get the shot from above; the oily water on top reflected the trees and sky, and the two lines are shadows from my legs.

Because of my art background I tend to think very visually. I'm drawn to things that have a quietness and a moodiness about them, because I think they have more to say. They seem to tug at my heart a little more than just pretty things, though those are nice too.

Kelley Arkema



magnolia blossoms Chicago Botanic Garden ©Kelley Arkema

I used to work in my garden and marvel at the perennials I planted. I still work in my yard today, but my focus shifted to planting flowers and herbs in containers and I still felt something was missing. Nature photography became an excellent way to explore my love of flowers.

I believe that as we age we need to be creative in finding ways to continue to enjoy our passion. My favorite part of nature photography is my ability to create a beautiful composition of how I see the world.



purple crocuses Glenview IL ©Kelley Arkema

Sara Berry

Since moving to Oregon in 2016, I am constantly amazed by the natural beauty and blue of the skies. Frequently, I am photographing at the least expected times. For example, this photograph of pinecones was captured while walking into class with one of my dogs.

My photography focuses on seeing and capturing the beauty of small details in the world around me. I really believe it's important to preserve these fleeting moments of beauty.



©Sara Berry



Untitled (Korean Fir), Tigard, Oregon, 2018, digital file ©Sara Berry



Looking Glass Project - Image #2731 ©Jody Magrady

Jody Magrady

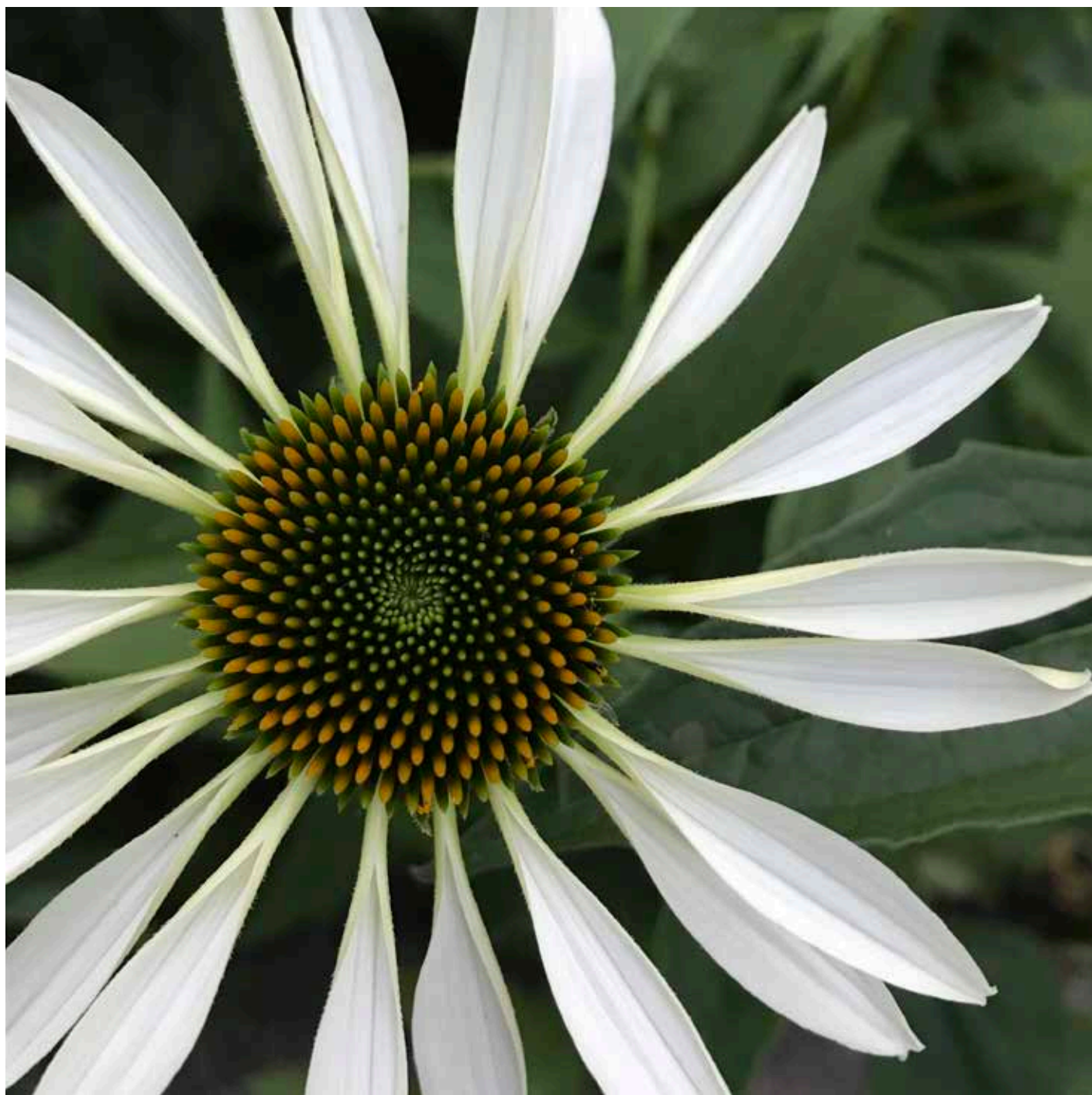
In 2008 I happened upon an overgrown conservatory made of textured wavy glass. The photograph on the left is from the first of three visits there, and is part of my Looking Glass Project.

I am fascinated by the way the light hits the surface at different times and angles, sometimes emphasizing texture, sometimes partially revealing what lies behind. There can be a stained glass effect, like a cathedral window, while other times the material seems to be fossilized in the glass itself.

The photographs themselves act like fossils preserving what could be seen at the time they were made. Some images remain abstract and some resolve into otherworldly landscapes.



Wax Begonia ©Jody Magrady

Kirsten Stadheim

©Kirsten Stadheim

The photos I like the most are the ones that stop me in my tracks: Surprises. Moments of beauty captured in light, reflection and shadow. Exposure of geometry, or order, in unexpected places. Contrasting textures revealing the extreme differences between them.



©Kirsten Stadheim

Flashes of humor from juxtaposing patterns and meanings, to faces that appear in unexpected places. Nature is a reliable source for these surprises.

the activists

Planting the Seeds of Change

Today's environmental movement owes a debt to women around the world who, before the issue became mainstream, led grassroots campaigns to ban pesticides, establish green spaces and fight for food security, all while uplifting communities. The women profiled here took on multinational corporations and their own governments with little more than information, a commitment to act and an inherent ability to raise awareness in ways that would make Mother Nature proud.



RACHEL CARSON

American biologist, author, environmentalist



In the late 1940s and 1950s, crop dusters took to the skies, spraying thousands of gallons of chemical pesticides over corn, wheat and soybeans fields across America. Housewives pumped FLIT cans full of the stuff on their backyard gardens. Mosquito control trucks pumped clouds of Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) into the air while children trailed after them, running through the fog. Even paint companies mixed DDT with house paint, claiming just one coat would brighten your home and keep bugs away.

The only problem: no one knew how dangerous these chemicals actually were. The United States government had declassified the pesticides, which it used during World War II to control typhus and other diseases, without conducting any scientific studies as to the risks to humans or the environment.

After just a few years of commercial use, the warning lights were flashing red.

By 1950 pesticide residues were detected in baby food, and just one year later in breast milk, meaning chemicals could be passed from mother to child.

Enter Rachel Carson, a biologist and writer whose groundbreaking 1962 book *Silent Spring* described for the first time the lasting effects of chemical pesticides on the environment and their risk to human health.

In January of 1958, a gardener and birdwatcher in Massachusetts sent Carson a letter about the dead birds in her back yard, which she believed were killed by DDT. Prompted by the letter and her work with the Fish and Wildlife Service in the 1930s and 1940s, where she first saw field reports of similar mass die-offs of birds and insects, Carson — by then a best-selling nature writer and recipient of a National Book Award — set to work.

She studied the toxicological properties of 19 pesticides and accessed hundreds of scientific studies documenting chemical residues in soil, groundwater and food crops. She compiled mountains of evidence to build her case that government had a duty to protect

its citizens from danger — and in this case, had fallen woefully short.

Silent Spring argued four main points: toxic pesticides were introduced to consumers without adequate research; pesticides not only killed natural enemies of the insects they targeted but would require higher concentrations as insects adapted; the public was being poisoned without knowledge or consent; and more research funds must be allocated to promote natural solutions.

Silent Spring was published on Sept. 27, 1962 and became an instant bestseller. It was serialized in "The New Yorker" and chosen as the main selection for Book of the Month Club. Six months later CBS aired a documentary based on Carson's book which drew 15 million viewers.

The book prompted an investigation by President Kennedy's Science Advisory Committee that confirmed Carson's research and led to congressional hearings on chemical pesticide use. As a result, Congress authorized the Clean Air Act in 1963; the Wilderness Act in 1964; and established the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970. Carson's work is also credited in part for establishing the Clean Water Act (1972) and the Endangered Species Act (1973).

But Carson faced her own battle. Diagnosed with breast cancer in 1960, she underwent a radical mastectomy and radiation while writing *Silent Spring*, but the cancer metastasized. She refused to disclose her illness publicly, as she and her work had become targets of the chemical industry and other lobbying groups.

Rachel Carson died on April 14, 1964. She was 56 years old.

"The history of life on earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings."

—Rachel Carson

WANGARI MAATHAI

Kenyan social, environmental and political activist
and Nobel Peace Prize recipient.

Karura Forest sits in the northern corner of Nairobi, Kenya, an oasis of more than 1,000 hectares of native trees, waterfalls and nature trails surrounded by a modern city of more than 3 million people. It's one of the largest urban forests in the world, and it wouldn't exist without the efforts of one woman: 2004 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Wangari Maathai.

Maathai's story begins in 1940 on her family's farmstead in Kenya's central highlands, where she was born at the foot of Mount Kenya. In 1960, she won a Kennedy scholarship to study in the United States, and earned a master's degree in biology from the University of Pittsburgh. She returned to Kenya in 1966 to teach at the University of Nairobi, where she became the first African woman to earn a Ph.D. Five years later she chaired an academic department, another first.

When Maatai returned to Africa, deforestation was a growing problem. Illegal logging and corrupt development deals had degraded forests and farmland; topsoil erosion from heavy rains filled rivers and streams; and widespread fertilizer use affected the quality of soil, making it hard to grow crops. Her solution: Plant more trees.

In 1977 Maatai founded the Green Belt Movement (GBM), an organization that planted trees and employed regular citizens, mostly women, to do it. Working with the National Council of Women of Kenya, and with support from the new Environment Program at the United Nations, Maatai grew the GBM into a broad-based, grassroots organization that employed women to plant trees on their farms, at schools and in churches.

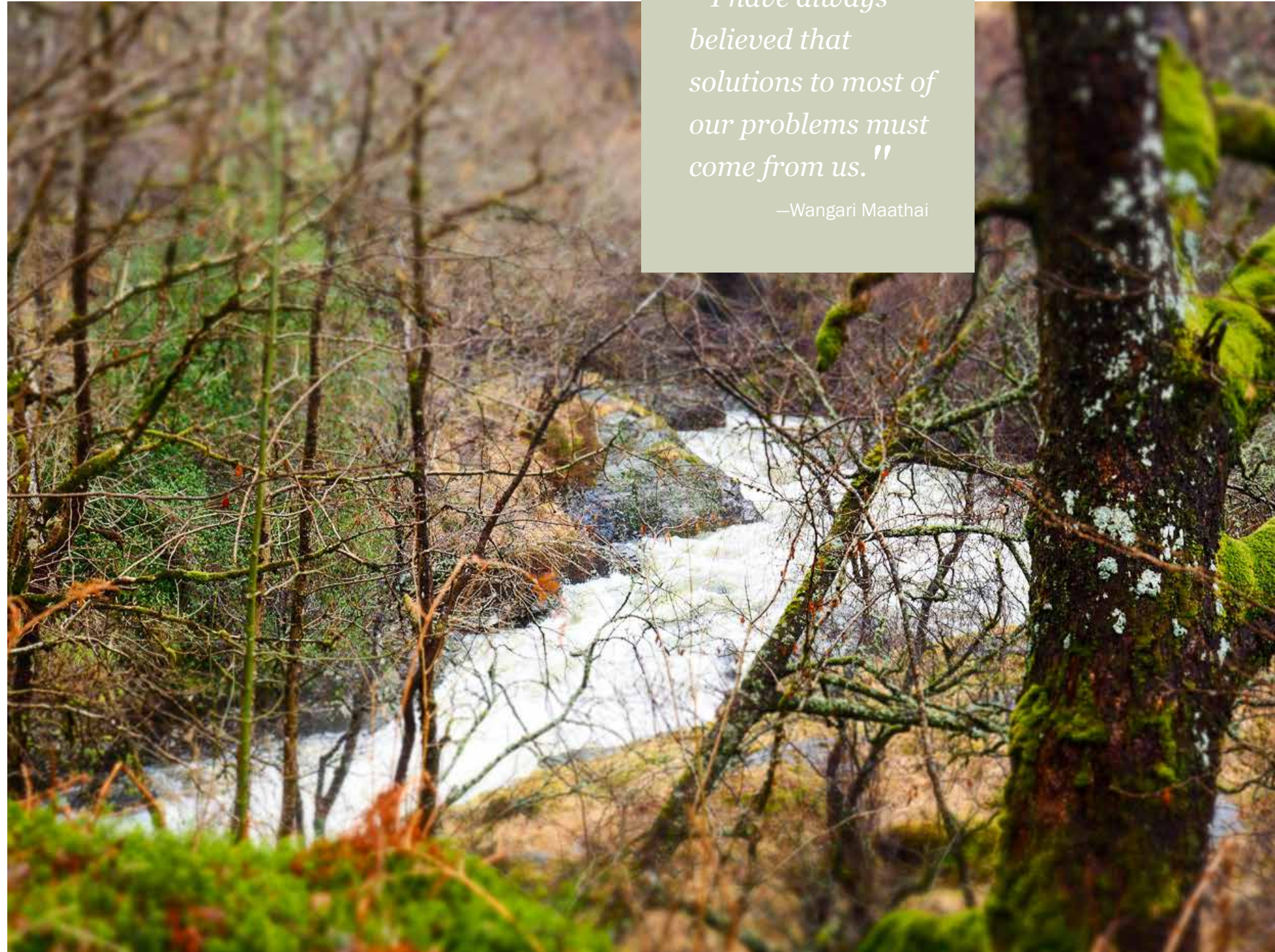
Maatai described the act of planting one tree "a simple act with profound meaning" that symbolized the nurturing of democracy, good governance and a practical approach to resource management.

Her path wasn't an easy one. Maatai's belief that ordinary people, particularly women, were the best advocates for their communities, and should be trusted to manage them, ran counter to the Kenyan government at the time.

Maatai fought against government corruption, especially land developers, and in 1989 led a successful international protest against a \$220 million development in Uhuru Park, directly petitioning England's Prince Charles for help.

In 1992, Maatai went into hiding as Kenya's president targeted her and other pro-democracy activists: in 1998, she led a hunger strike to prevent developers from building in Karura Forest in Nairobi.

Maatai was elected to Parliament in 2002, and in 2004 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the first African woman and the first environmentalist to be recognized.



"I have always believed that solutions to most of our problems must come from us."

—Wangari Maathai

"In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground," Maathai said in her Nobel Prize acceptance speech. "A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now."

Maatai died in 2011 after being diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Her legacy lives on in the butterflies, waterfalls and lilly ponds of Karura Forest, where the Kenyan Forest Service runs education programs and community events. Professional guides lead groups of schoolchildren through the memorial groves dedicated to her memory.

To date, the Green Belt Movement has planted more than 50 million trees in Kenya and East Africa — one tiny sapling at a time.

TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS

American author, conservationist and activist

In 1995 the state of Utah held public hearings on the Utah Public Lands Management Act, a bill sponsored by the state's congressional delegation that would determine how many of Utah's 22 million acres of public land to set aside as wilderness. More than 70 percent of Utah residents supported 5.7 million wilderness acres; Senator Orrin Hatch and other politicians wanted far fewer.

By the time of the hearings, writer and activist Terry Tempest Williams had already earned a reputation as an authority on environmental and social issues. A native of Utah, in 1991 Tempest Williams published *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, a memoir of her mother's cancer diagnosis, the flooding of a beloved childhood bird refuge and her own struggle with her Mormon faith. In the book, Tempest Williams also reports on her family's high incidence of breast cancer after being exposed to fallout from the US government's above-ground nuclear testing in the 1950s and 1960s.

As for the wilderness bill, Sen. Hatch and others ignored the citizens' input and designated just 1.8 million acres for wilderness. In a last-ditch effort to fight the bill, Tempest Williams and Stephen Trimble, a friend and advocate, published *Testimony: Writers Speak on Behalf of Utah Wilderness*, a collection of essays from 20 writers on land management and the environment that was delivered to members of Congress and President Clinton.

The bill never came to a vote in the Senate, in part due to the outcry from citizens and the publicity surrounding *Testimony*, which Sen. Bill Bradley read on the Senate floor. In 1996, President Clinton designated the new Grand Staircase - Escalante National Monument, protecting 2 million acres of Utah wildness. At the announcement, he held up a copy of *Testimony*. "This made a difference," he said.*

Today, Tempest Williams continues to write and advocate on a range of social, feminist and environmental issues. Her work appears regularly in national newspapers and magazines, and political and literary anthologies.

*In 2017, President Trump ordered the monument's size reduced by 47 percent. Conservation and outdoor recreation groups immediately filed suit to block the order. The lawsuits are pending.

“Wildness reminds us what it means to be human, what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from.”

—Terry Tempest Williams



the collectors

forever in *Bloom*

Originally designed as a desktop accessory, paperweights became a decorative way of celebrating flowers and nature.

Imagine a cold, dark and dreary winter's day in London, around 1848. For diversion, you try to read the Bronte sisters' newly published novels *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. The fairly recent gas lights are a help, but it's still a challenge to read by them. It will be 30 years before the lightbulb is invented.

You could be distracted by a telegraph, but you can't share the news with a friend by telephone until at least 1876. It will be another year before you can use a safety pin to fix a tear in your bloomers (both 1849). Listening to music on a phonograph will have to wait until 1877. Study an accurate map of the world? Not until 1890.

What you can do is gaze upon spring flowers encased in glass, a new industry in Victorian England. Queen Victoria has popularized the burgeoning fad with her own curated collection and the Industrial Revolution has helped make them available to the masses. Their original purpose was as a paperweight to accommodate the growing interest in letter writing, thanks in part to the invention of the adhesive stamp in 1840.

Their practical use quickly gave way to interest in their decorative beauty. These *objet d'arts* brilliantly captured the glory of flowers and nature, preserving it for admirers even in those dreary European winters.

The artistry used in these paperweights was over 3,000 years in the making.



A Baccarat paperweight showcases millefiori flowers.



Millefiori, meaning a thousand flowers, is the most common technique used in paperweights.

In 1845, the three great French houses of fine glass, Baccarat, Clichy and St.Louis, began resurrecting the millefiori technique in their glass production. Millefiori begins with colored glass rods or canes that are fused together, creating a flower shape. These fused rods are stretched, shaped and fired to form the basic materials for the technique.

They are then encased in glass like the one shown above.

As historians are inclined to do, there is disagreement on where these techniques originated.

Some believe their first appearance was in ancient Mesopotamia. Others give the nod to the ancient Egyptians and their thriving artistic culture. In any event, artifacts found by archaeologists show that both cultures created decorative vases, drinking vessels, mosaics, beads, cameos and other jewelry with flower and nature themed decorations, beginning around 15th century BC.



In addition to flowers, scenes like this one are intended to preserve nature motifs.

It was the Romans who gave it the name millefiori when they conquered Egypt and most of the civilized world, spreading the skill throughout their empire. When the empire fell it would be nearly 1,000 years before it reliably reappeared in those 19th century French houses of glass.

Initially, the few 19th century paperweights produced were expensive and collected mainly by royalty and more wealthy citizens. When they rose in popularity, mass production of paperweights began in earnest with factories opening throughout Europe to meet demand. Designs weren't limited to millefiori flowers. Their goal of preserving natural world themes included pastoral scenes with plants, birds, butterflies and other insects. Many of those pieces were created using a technique known as lampwork, as shown in the example above.

Like most fads, paperweight's popularity was fleeting and waned by the dawn of the 20th century.



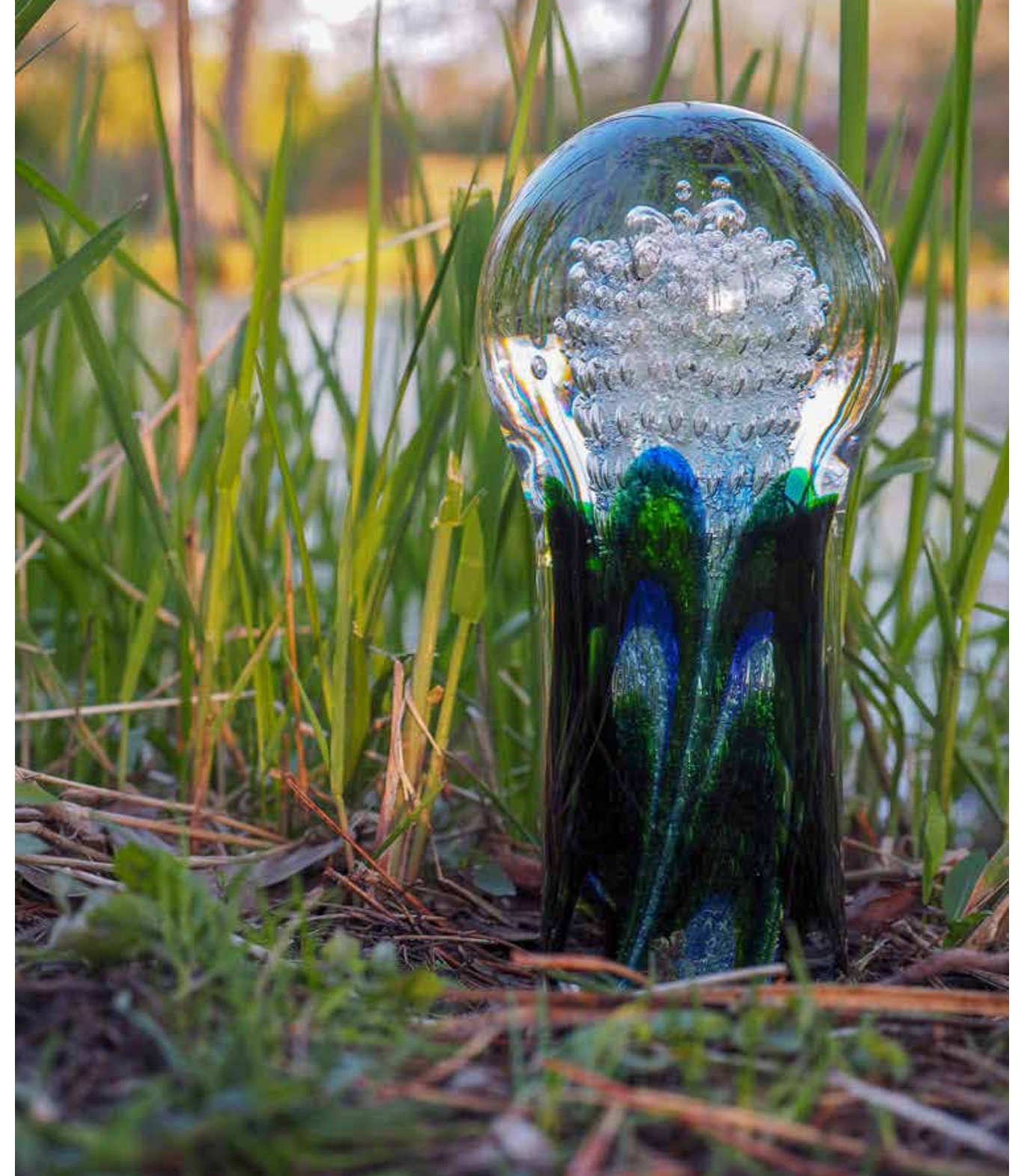
A lampwork lily encased in blue glass references a summer pond.

When mass migration to the United States was in full swing in the early 20th century, glass artists from Europe brought their skills to America. Louis Comfort Tiffany was one of the most famous craftsmen to adopt their techniques in his studio.

In the 1950s at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, the modern Studio Glass Movement began. Artists continued pushing the boundaries of glass, including paperweights, as artworks in their own right. Today skilled practitioners producing art glass paperweights include Cathy Richardson, Debbie Tarsitano and Alison Ruzsa.

There have been many famous paperweight collectors. The French writer Collette suggested her collection be buried with her “like a Pharaoh.” She gifted one of hers to Truman Capote, kickstarting his obsession. Oscar Wilde was also a fan. Some of the more famous aficionados: Eva Peron, Johnny Carson, Anne Bancroft, Henry Winkler, John Madden and Malcom Forbes.

Arthur Rubloff, a renowned Chicago real estate developer, donated his collection to the Art Institute of Chicago, where selections from the 1,400 piece collection, considered one of the world's finest, are on permanent display.



Modern glass art intended to mimic a natural scene.

Other museums where you can enjoy the beauty of paperweights are the Corning Glass Museum in New York; the Morton D. Barker collection at the Illinois State Museum; and the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum in Wisconsin. A visit any time of the year is worthwhile, but they seem particularly beautiful in the winter.

the role models

late bloomers

Finding success, often in their second or third careers, these well-known women became famous after 40 when they reinvented themselves.



Lynda Weiman

Online Learning

Finding her passion when she taught herself how to use the Apple II computer her boyfriend brought home, Weinman began her tech career as a teacher and special affects animator.

Now a successful technology entrepreneur, she co-founded the online software training website lynda.com.

In 1995, lynda.com debuted free to Weinman's students. Over the years it grew into a complete online library of software and technology courses.

In 2015 she sold lynda.com to LinkedIn for \$1.5 billion.



Martha Stewart

Mogul

After careers as a model, stockbroker, caterer and shop owner, Stewart released her first book, *Entertaining*, in 1996. She was 41.

Other lifestyle books followed and in 1990 she launched her magazine *Living*. Martha Stewart Omnimedia now oversees a diverse portfolio of media projects, retail goods and hotels. Her original Hamptons home is now a B&B.

A brief stint in prison for insider trading couldn't keep her down. Stewart's latest project has her paired with rap and media star Snoop Dogg. Entertaining indeed.



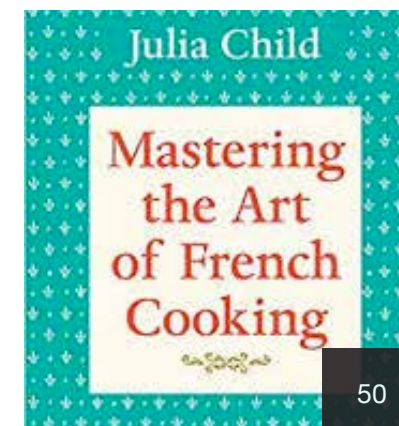
Pleasant Rowland

Entrepreneur

A love of history and a search for dolls for her nieces led Rowland to launch American Girl in 1986 using her savings from a career as a textbook author.

The dolls, paired with historical backstories and period appropriate accessories, bring in annual sales second only to Barbie.

Rowland sold the company to Mattel in 1998 for \$700 million, then bought a bankrupt home decor company and guided it to profitability before starting a foundation promoting reading in schools.



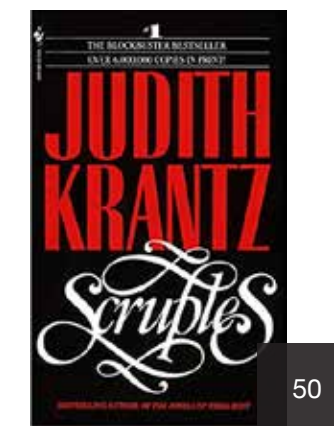
Julia Child

Culinary Arts

Child spent years overseas working for the US Office of Strategic Services. While stationed with her husband in Paris, she began taking courses at the world famous Cordon Bleu.

Collaborating with two French women, she published *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* in 1962 when she was 50.

A year later the first episode of her Emmy Award winning "The French Chef" aired on PBS, where it ran for 10 years. Recognized as the first celebrity chef, Child continued to work in television, publishing and other media until her death in 2004 at 91.



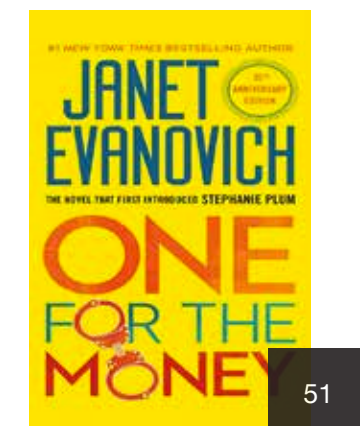
Judith Krantz

Writer

Krantz was a freelance magazine writer best known for "The Myth of the Modern Orgasm" in *Cosmopolitan*. Then her husband challenged her to write a book.

That book, *Scruples*, reached No. 1 and helped secure Krantz a \$5 million advance for her second book, *Princess Daisy*. In all, Krantz published 11 books, including an autobiography, most of which the couple turned into juicy TV miniseries about luxury Beverly Hills life.

Krantz died in June in Bel Air, California at 91.



Janet Evanovich

Writer

After minor success publishing a romance novel in 1987 at 44, Evanovich created Stephanie Plum, a bounty hunter surrounded by a cast of characters and a romance triangle.

Her first Plum novel, *One For the Money*, was published in 1994 when she was 51.

The series took off with *Hot Six*, the sixth book in the series, reaching No. 1 on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Since then, each book has debuted at No. 1.

Look Alive, the 25th book in the series was released in November 2018.



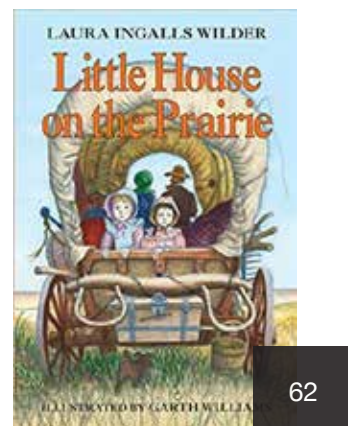
Judy Sheindlin

TV Personality

Better known as Judge Judy, Sheindlin was in-house counsel for a cosmetics firm before donning judge's robes as a New York family court judge. There, she earned a reputation as a tough talking jurist.

This reputation led to a profile on "60 Minutes". Soon after she was offered a book deal as well as her own syndicated show.

"Judge Judy" debuted in 1996 when Sheindlin was 52. Now in its 23rd season, she reportedly earns \$47 million annually from the show.



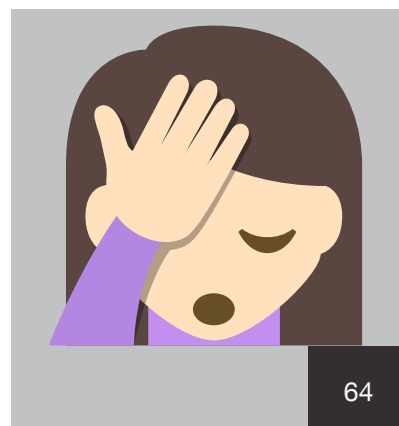
Laura Ingalls Wilder

Writer

Her first book, *Little House in the Big Woods*, was published when she was 62; the last when she was 77. The Little House series remains popular, despite recent controversy over her depiction of Native Americans.

Wilder began her writing career penning "As a Farm Woman Thinks," a weekly column in a local paper. Her daughter (and rumored ghostwriter) Rose encouraged her to write her memoirs, which became the Little House series.

Wilder's home in Missouri is now a museum, drawing 30,000 visitors a year.



Anonymous

Wonder Woman

In 2017, a hospital in Burgos, Spain announced the birth of twins, a boy and a girl. Their mother was a 64-year-old woman whose first child had just turned six.

That's it. That's all we have to say.



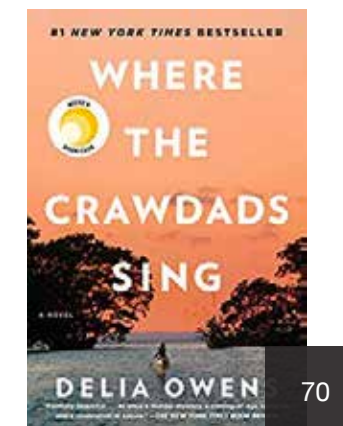
Mary Delany

Artist

At first glance, this flower looks painted but it was actually created by Mary Delany painstakingly cutting hundreds of pieces of paper to assemble the realistic tableau.

Twice widowed (her first marriage was forced upon her at age 17 to a man 45 years older) Delany was 71 when she began to decoupage flowers in the late 1700s, a popular pastime with ladies of the court.

Delany created over 1,700 pieces, working until she was 88 on her collection, now housed at the British Museum.



Delia Owens

Writer

In the 1970s, Owens, a zoologist, and her then-husband moved to Africa where they spent decades working at various nature reserves and parks while studying and caring for the animals.

Together, they wrote three memoirs about their experiences.

Owens returned to the states and in 2018 published her first novel, *Where the Crawdads Sing*. She was 70.

The New York Times bestseller is being made into a feature film by Reese Witherspoon's production company.



Grandma Moses

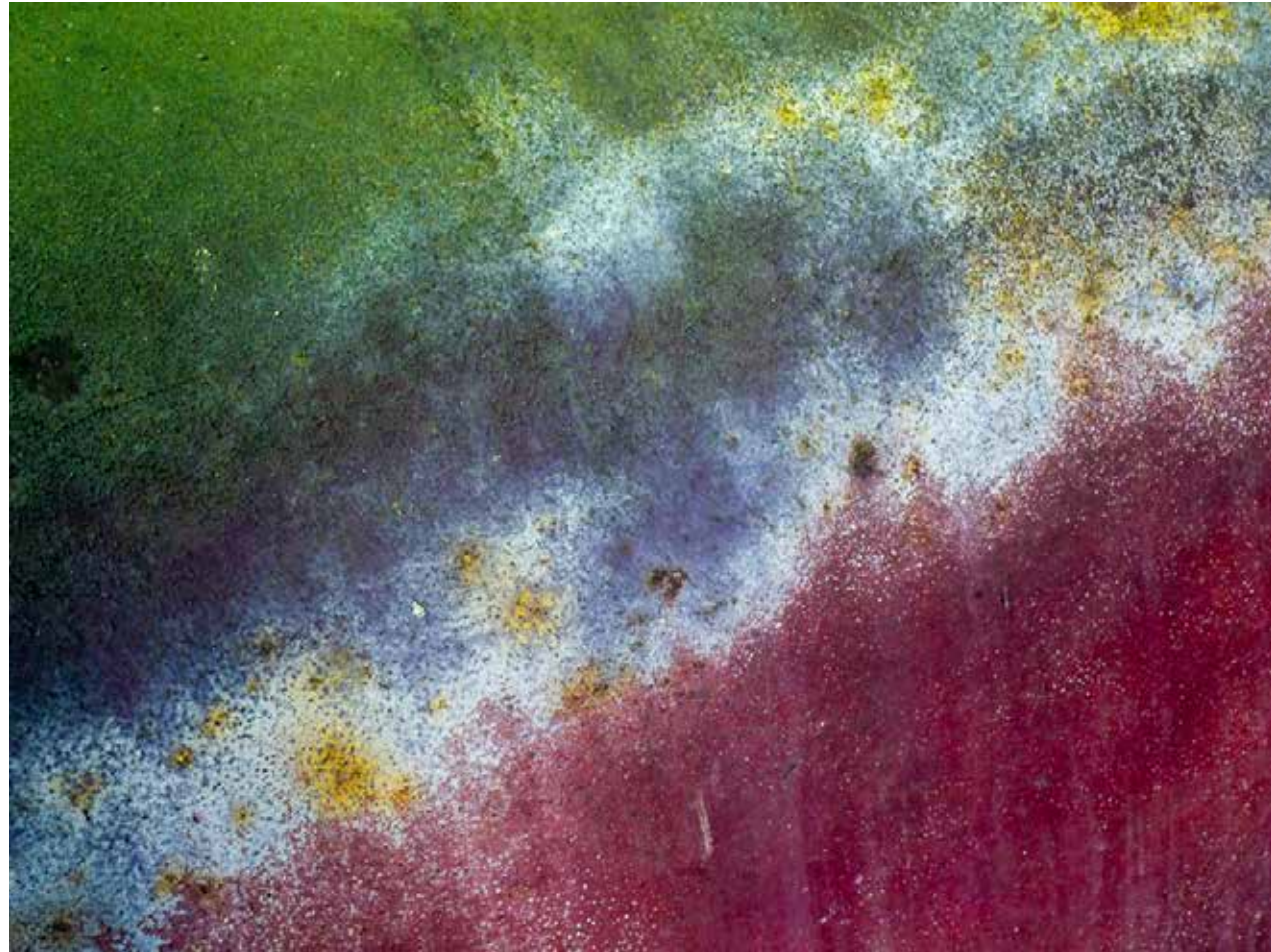
Painter

The grandmother of late bloomers, Anna Mary Robertson Moses spent her first 75 years as a nanny, cook, farmer, seamstress, wife, mother and grandmother.

During those years, she excelled at decorative arts like embroidery and quilting. When her hands were too arthritic to sew she turned to painting.

Her paintings, for sale at a local drug store, were discovered by an art collector and the rest is art history. Moses painted up until her death at 101.

behind the scenes



I recently photographed a collector's warehouse filled to the brim with old cars — classics from bygone eras in various states of (dis)repair. The flashier cars were up front, well on their way to being restored to their former glory. In the back were the giant shells of dependable models from yesteryear rusting away.

Shooting under the terrible warehouse lighting, I captured the rust blooming on the hood of one of those solid American cars, long abandoned but still with stories to tell, helping to bridge the gap between this issue of **BLOOM** and our next issue, **WANDER**.

We hope to see you there.

— ckb

CREDITS & RESOURCES

Kelley Arkema's nature photography (pages 26 and 27) has become a creative passion. She is currently compiling a portfolio of her photographs and establishing a website. To see more of Kelley's work, follow her on Instagram @kaphotography2019 and her Facebook page (KA photography).

Sara Berry (pages 28 and 29) earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Photography from Maryland Institute College of Art. Sara's photography focuses on seeing and capturing the beauty of small details in the world around her. She works full-time as the Training and Behavior Modification Coordinator at a veterinary behavior specialty clinic in Portland, Oregon, where her training as a photographer informs her work by helping people see details and changes in their pets.

Autumn Damiani (page 55) is currently a student at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago majoring in Interior Architecture.

Jody Magrady (pages 30 and 31) earned a Master of Fine Arts in Photography from the University of Illinois at Chicago. After a career in Information Systems, she became an adjunct photography professor at Columbia College Chicago and taught at The Art Center in Highland Park, Illinois. Now retired, she exhibits in the Midwest and online at jodymagrady.com

Amanda Nugent (pages 24 and 25) holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in Illustration. A committed environmentalist, naturalist and activist, she teaches science and nature in the outdoor classrooms of two local elementary schools. "I bring in my collection of animal skulls and the kids love it," she says. Amanda's current focus is oil painting, in particular landscapes and still lifes.

Kirsten Stadheim (pages 22, 32 and 33) earned a bachelor's degree in studio art from Kenyon College and master's degree from the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia. Her photography is shaped by her early training in art to draw what you see, not what you know.



one last thing . . .

BLOOMERS

Years before bra burning became a symbol of liberation, bloomers were designed to set women free.

Today the thought of wearing bloomers is old-fashioned - a throwback to a more restrictive time when women were expected to cover up. In reality, their origins were designed to free women from the constricting fashion of the times.

Floor length skirts, starched petticoats and tightly-fitted whalebone corsets were the fashion of the day in the 1840s. The corsets were so tight and constricting that they often caused a woman's internal organs to shift out of place.

In 1849, a popular health magazine, *The Water-Cure Journal*, began urging its readers to live a more healthy lifestyle by freeing their insides through less restrictive outfits, allowing for internal organ freedom.

The idea that stuck was modeled after a style of pant popular in Turkey. They quickly became known as bloomers after Amelia Jenks Bloomer, a well-known women's rights activist, encouraged their use in her temperance journal *The Lily*.

The bloomer craze swept the nation. Lauded for their health and safety attributes, this unconventional undergarment became a symbol of the women's rights movement. Suffragettes Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone and Susan B. Anthony were early adopters, wearing what they called the freedom dress at rallies to support women's right to vote.

There were plenty of detractors to the scandalous new dress. Clergymen preached against bloomer-wearing women, denying them membership in their churches. Opponents to women's rights argued that the bloomers were too similar to men's pants, usurping their rightful place in the social order.

Suffragettes eventually stepped away from bloomers, worried that too much attention was being placed on how they dressed and not enough on the positive changes they were trying to make.

Sounds familiar.



Papercut designed by Autumn Damiani

CONTACT

editor@mutterhood.com

ckb@mutterhood.com

efh@mutterhood.com

FOLLOW

www.mutterhood.com

[instagram@mutterhood](https://www.instagram.com/mutterhood)

[twitter@mutterhood](https://twitter.com/mutterhood)

facebook.com/mutterhood

mutterhood

a community of thought one idea at a time



Next:

WANDER

Summer 2019