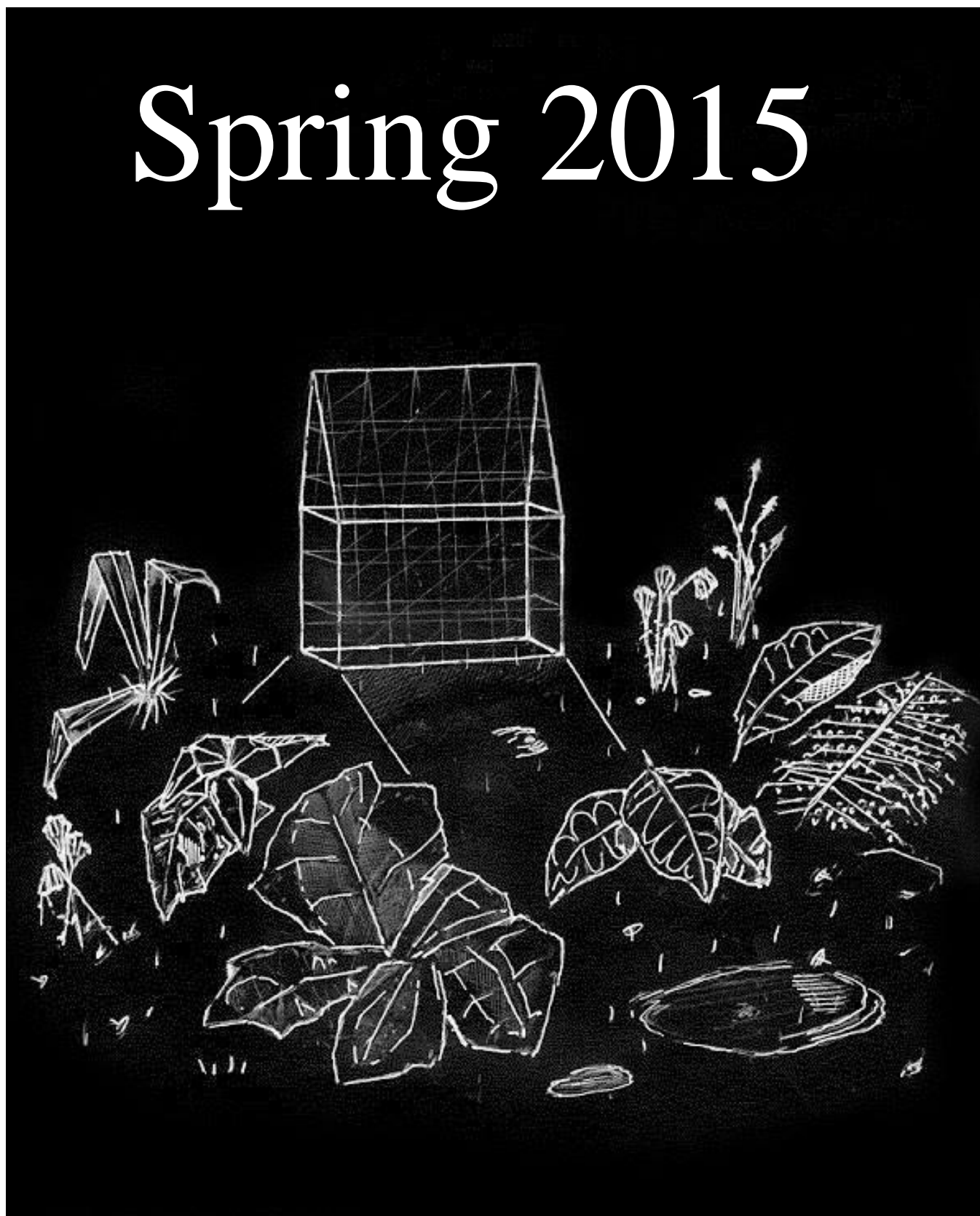
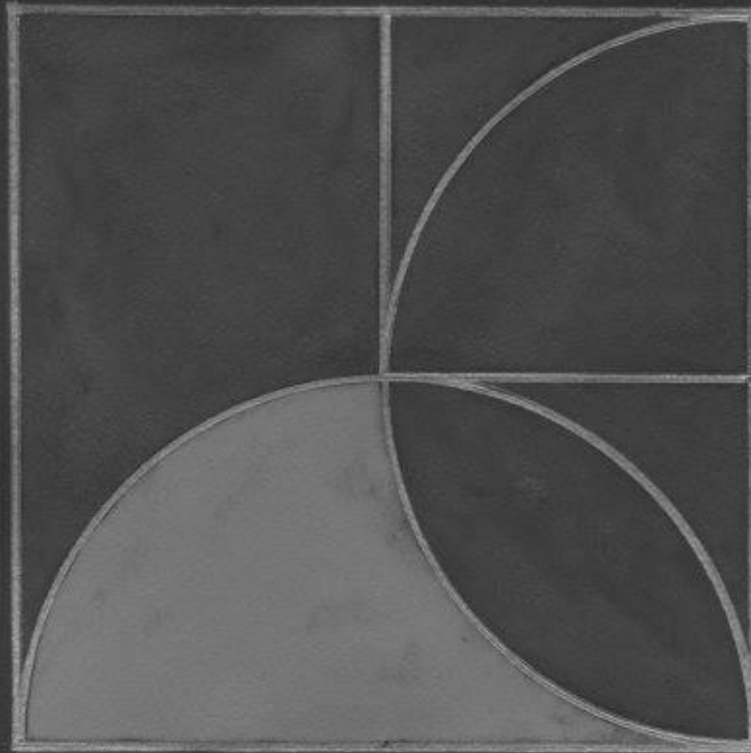


# Avant Gardening

## Spring 2015





THE IMPORTANT THING  
IS TO BE ABLE AT ANY  
MOMENT TO SACRIFICE  
WHAT YOU ARE FOR  
WHAT YOU COULD BECOME.

CHARLES DUBOIS





I'm having one of those "oh god the world is going to end before complacency is shaken off and we achieve sufficient organization/mobilization to enact revolution (if, in fact, that is what we have going on here)" moments.

What should the goal be?

Local revolution, national revolution, global revolution, achieving one (some) by means of the other(s)?

What does revolution even mean?

Is thinking in these particular spatial categories even appropriate?

Anti-colonial revolutions in the '60s were able to shake it off in their individual countries, but only because it benefitted the "parent countries," and (so) even that didn't happen.

A global economic system has never been overthrown, but has only mutated more or less organically in a self-perfecting move: capitalism has never been so capitalistic.

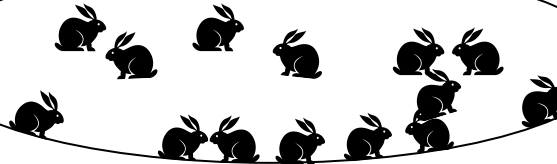
There has never been the rupture that seems to be floating around the collective activist imaginary.

How can we act or even organize effectively if our guiding narrative 1) has never been witnessed, and 2) is likely completely wrong?

To what extent is revolution actually thinkable?

And if it's not very, is that a detriment to its possibility? Can we have a revolution, anyway?

To what extent is revolution inevitable such that we can use/follow its own momentum, to what extent am I only feeling its inevitability because of my social context, to what extent is it happening or not around the country/world, to what extent is what is happening wrongheaded, to what extent are we/am I wrongheaded in this?



- ❖ From Program to Action
  - Organizing
    - Scheduling
    - Work Parties
    - Outreach Events
    - Institutional Coordination (government, civic and private alliances)
  - Organization
    - Membership and Volunteers
    - Meetings
    - Setting Goals
    - Self-Criticism
    - Autonomism
  - Social Transformation
    - Offshoot Organizations
    - Coordinating Groups
    - Political Obstacles
      - Regulations and Codes
      - Anti-philanthropy sentiment
      - Police
      - Special Interests
    - Gardens for the People
      - Food is Free
      - Community Resilience

# So What Is Avant Gardening?

Every Avant Gardener, has their own idea what Avant Gardening is. Nevertheless, we do share common truths and values in concern to Avant Gardening.

Avant Gardening is better understood as a verb than a noun. So yes, this zine produced by a radical collective of eco-activist based out of Eugene and Portland, Oregon. But more so, Avant Gardening is an aesthetic, an approach to gardening available to anyone with the desire to partake in Avant Gardening. Hopefully this zine fertilizes your inspiration to start your own autonomous horizontally organized Avant Gardening collective.

Avant Gardening is gardening with the acknowledgement that the natural world does not exist solely to satisfy human objectives. As opposed to attempting to control nature with our agricultural pursuits, Avant Gardeners approach gardening as stewards of our natural environment. And towards that purpose we use permaculture and biodynamic techniques to heal and transform the land we garden. And towards that purpose we use permaculture and biodynamic techniques to heal and transform the land we garden.

# Avant-Gardener Theory of Organizations

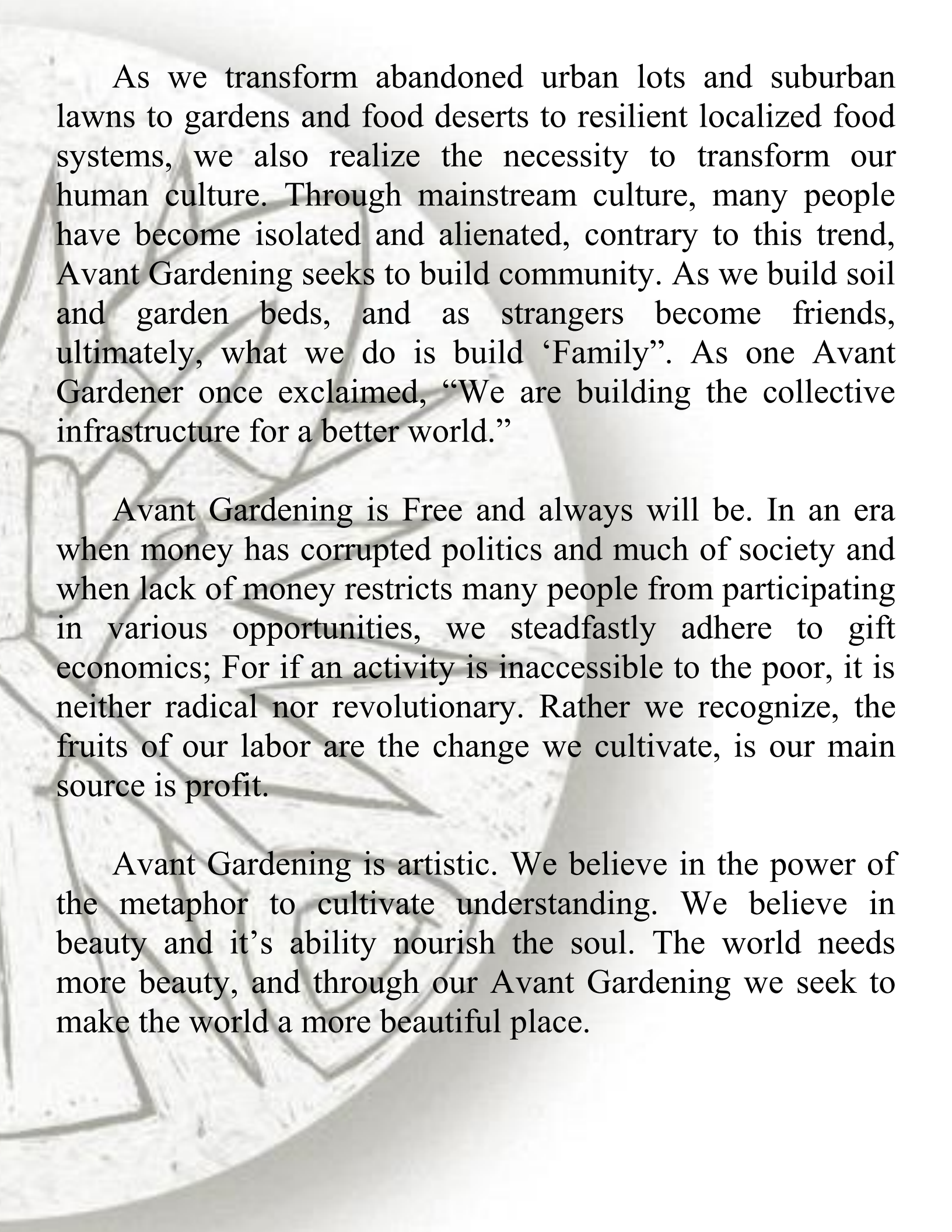
We present to you an overview of the AG theory of organization in the form of an outline. It pertains to what are essentially our priorities, values, and goals: basically, what makes AG. The questions that we need to be asking along the way, the obstacles and conflicts that need to be kept in mind, and above all the beliefs that drive what we do. This is only an overview, so stay tuned: there's more to come!

Two-stages: First we take the idea of avant-gardening and through it analyze the local situation. Activists position themselves accordingly. In the second stage we begin to organize, accomplishing concrete goals and building community alliances. Neither of these two moments are purely separate from the other, and as time goes on AG organizers will find that they intermix fluidly.

## ❖ From Idea to Program

- What is avant-gardening?
  - Localization of food production
  - Autonomous decision-making
  - “Applied ecology” – gardening and the ecosystem
- What are the conditions of your local situation?
  - How much food is produced locally?
  - How many people want to get involved immediately?
  - What available land is there for gardening?
  - What are the codes and regulations pertaining to gardening?
  - What organizations already exist that share similar interests and goals?
  - What are the parameters of the local ecosystem? What can it handle, what will contribute to or hinder its health?
  - What resources are available?
    - Seeds and starts
    - Tools
    - Supplements





As we transform abandoned urban lots and suburban lawns to gardens and food deserts to resilient localized food systems, we also realize the necessity to transform our human culture. Through mainstream culture, many people have become isolated and alienated, contrary to this trend, Avant Gardening seeks to build community. As we build soil and garden beds, and as strangers become friends, ultimately, what we do is build ‘Family’. As one Avant Gardener once exclaimed, “We are building the collective infrastructure for a better world.”

Avant Gardening is Free and always will be. In an era when money has corrupted politics and much of society and when lack of money restricts many people from participating in various opportunities, we steadfastly adhere to gift economics; For if an activity is inaccessible to the poor, it is neither radical nor revolutionary. Rather we recognize, the fruits of our labor are the change we cultivate, is our main source is profit.

Avant Gardening is artistic. We believe in the power of the metaphor to cultivate understanding. We believe in beauty and it’s ability nourish the soul. The world needs more beauty, and through our Avant Gardening we seek to make the world a more beautiful place.

# Some Ways 2 Avant Garden

1. Organize a work party for someone in need or yourself.
2. Make seeded paper, gather community to create artwork on that paper. Plant your artistic seeded paper.
3. Transform underutilized public space through guerilla gardening and seed bombing.
4. Start a community garden or edible food forest.
5. Grow food to freely distribute to those who need it most: including seniors, disabled citizens, and all low-income members of your community.
6. Give away free veggie starts.
7. Teach or organize a free workshop on gardening/ pruning/ seed saving/ food preservation, etc.
8. Cultivate alliances with and contribute to other non-profit and/or activist organizations dedicated to food justice or food resiliency.
9. Create drawings, murals, poems, stories and other artworks that celebrate permaculture gardening and/or the natural world.
10. By no means, does this list cover all of what Avant Gardening is. Rather, it is a list of potential starting points. We encourage you to create your own Avant Gardening projects. Try, Fail, Learn, Succeed... Rinse and Repeat. Share your success stories with us at: [eugeneavantgardeners@gmail.com](mailto:eugeneavantgardeners@gmail.com)

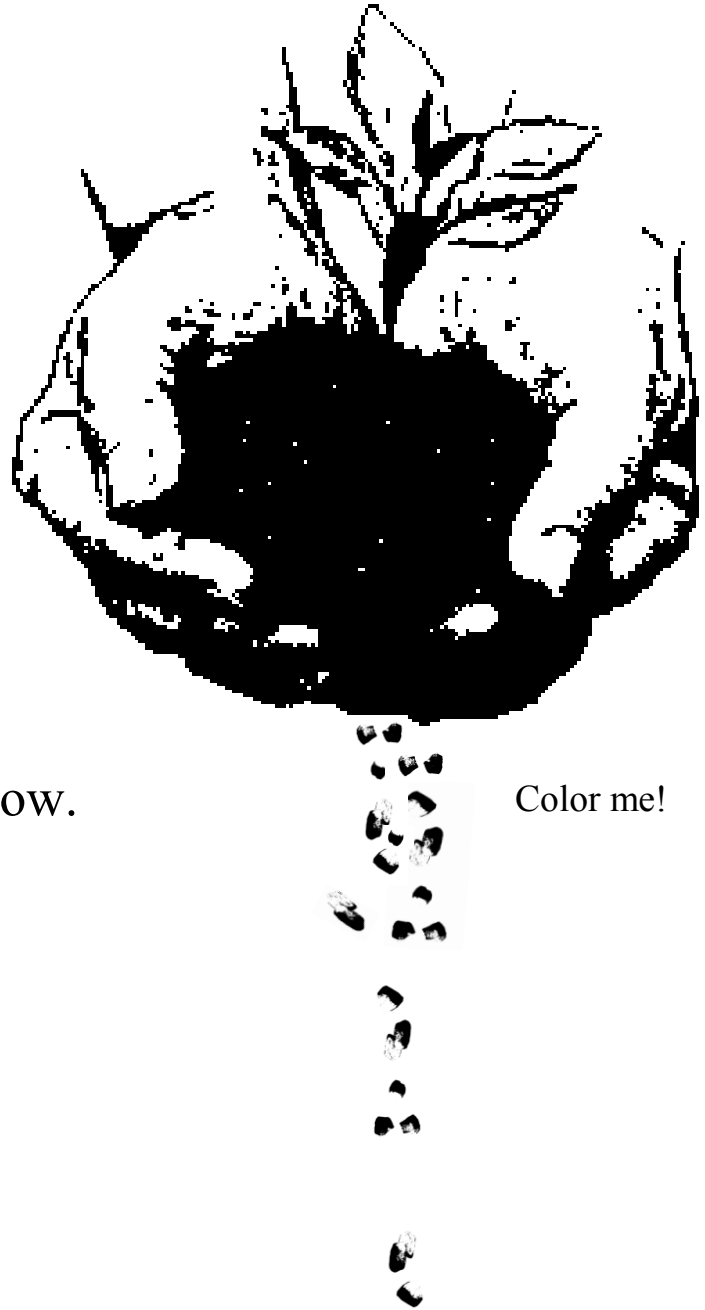
# Seedling

calloused hands,  
treading through dirt,  
finding solace and home  
for this seed;  
fresh

*ready for life...*

There is always time to grow.

-Calvin Chance



Color me!

Why? Because all drains lead to streams, rivers, and the ocean. Also known as *storm water*, this differs from *waste water*, which is water removed via indoor plumbing and channeled to a treatment facility.

Of the endless aspects of strong water stewardship practices, here are a few tips to help you prevent NPS^^:

- \*Keep litter, pet wastes, leaves and debris out of street gutters and storm drains- these outlets drain directly into lakes, streams, rivers, and wetlands.
- \*Apply lawn and garden chemicals sparingly and according to directions.
- \*Dispose of used oil, antifreeze, paints and other household chemicals properly- not in storm sewers or drains. If your community does not already have a program for collecting household hazardous wastes, ask your local government to establish one.
- \*Clean up spilled brake fluid, oil, grease, and antifreeze. Do not hose them into the street where they can eventually reach local streams and lakes.
- \*Control soil erosion on your property by planting ground cover and stabilizing erosion—prone areas.
- \*Encourage local government officials to develop construction erosion and sediment control ordinances in your community.
- \*Have your septic system inspected and pumped every three to five years, so that it operates properly.
- \*Purchase household detergents and cleaners that are low in phosphorous (or better yet, BIODEGRADABLE) to reduce the amount of nutrients discharged into your lakes, streams, and coastal waters. [Excess nutrients can result in harmful algae blooms and deprive oxygen from waterways, resulting in dead zones.]
- \*\*examples courtesy of OSU Extension Service, Lane County Sustainable Landscaping class

^^Source: USEPA, <http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/whatudo.cfm>

# Eat Your Lawn!

We are animals, beings of the natural world. No matter how hard we may try to disconnect from this fact through our modern culture, the fact remains. Yet, most of us have become so disconnected from our natural environment that we couldn't survive even three days in the wild, without a bunch of camping supplies. How odd it is, that we've come to a point in our culture where the average person is able to identify more famous celebrities than local medicinal and edible plants. Surely, we have to start to reverse this trend. And surely, a good place to start is the ubiquitous dandelion. Those dandelions, that we call weeds and that grow freely in our lawn, are full of minerals and vitamins similar to the bitter greens, wrapped in plastic, and sold at your local grocery store. Grocery stores are essential in our present culture, no doubt. But don't forget that you are a humanimal. So go outside, get your hands in the dirt, and EAT YOUR LAWN!



By Moksha

**Water is life.** Seventy percent of our home (planet Earth) is water; how curious that the human body reflects this ratio. Pretty darn fascinating. Even if you are blessed to live in a lush paradise where water is pristine and bountiful, we ALL, urgently, need to reconnect with the water element. After all, it is the lifeblood of our beautiful biosphere.

The water crisis is silent and invisible to most urban and suburban dwellers. If you live in, say, Long Island, Southern California, or Texas, buying bottled water is a normalized part of daily life due to water contamination and scarcity issues. We all understand the basic fact of survival: that water is essential to sustaining life. There is literally nothing artificial or natural that can be created without water.

So why are we, collectively, allowing contamination of a fundamental resource; betting that a solution will miraculously save us from our own destructive and ignorant habits? Think of your children and future generations.

I challenge you, wonderful reader, to take a moment and notice how many ways you utilize water in a given day.

With so many examples of bad practice (lack of accountability) to learn from, let us focus on a solution-oriented vision. The beauty of this is that it merely takes simple expansion of consciousness (awareness) to start protecting and healing our irreplaceable local watersheds. Remember, there is no time to waste!

This vision starts in the home. Everyone can start focusing on something called, Nonpoint Source Pollution (NPS). Suburban and urban America was built on the (capitalistic) philosophy of “out of sight, out of mind”, failing to reflect the externalities (i.e. environmental destruction) by design. City streets, rural homes, suburban development, farm land, and animal feed lots are all examples of NPS. Runoff from sprinklers, small oil leaks on a neighborhood street, and even pouring grease and household cleaning products down the drain all contribute to NPS. \*\*

# Dandelion Tomato Soup

Dandelion leaves are some of the most nutritious greens around, much higher in vitamins and minerals than any vegetable you can buy in a grocery store. When you gather dandelion, make sure you get it from a place that hasn't had lawn care chemicals applied to it in a misguided effort to eradicate this wonderful plant. Don't pick things you intend to eat from near busy roads, because of car exhaust. Wash your greens!

Dandelion leaves are a bit on the bitter side, especially as the weather gets warmer, so the best foods to include them in are ones with a bit of acidity to counteract the bitter taste. Anything with tomato, citrus or vinegar will work. Or you can add the leaves in smaller amounts to almost any dish and embrace the bitter to give a boost to liver function.

- 1 quart chopped or crushed tomatoes, canned or fresh
- 1 quart vegetable broth or water (water from steaming vegetables, boiling potatoes, corn or juice from canned veggies all work well)
- 1 teaspoon or 2 big pinches italian seasoning OR 2 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs
- 1 large handful or more of washed dandelion leaves
- a little oil (pumpkin seed oil is yummy, Willamette Valley local and available at Hummingbird Wholesale and several stores, but you can use the best of whatever you have)
- large saucepan
- scissors

Bring tomatoes and water to a boil, turn off the heat and add herbs. Chop the dandelion leaves into small bits with the scissors directly into the pot of soup. Serve into bowls and add a little oil to each bowl (around ½-1 tsp). Enjoy!

Bake 50-55 minutes or until the cake is golden and a knife inserted in the middle comes out clean. Cool for 5 minutes before removing it from the pan, then unmold allow it to cool to room temperature. Serve with whipped cream and apricot-rhubarb chutney (below).

## Apricot Rhubarb Chutney

2 cups diced rhubarb (2 large stalks)

2 cups dried apricot halves, diced

1 small red onion, minced

1 cup honey

1 cup golden raisins

2 cups cider vinegar

Zest and juice of 1 large lemon

1 Tbsp minced fresh ginger root

½ tsp ground cloves

1 tsp allspice

1 tsp cinnamon

¼erfg tsp cayenne pepper

Combine all ingredients in a heavy sauce pan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes or until it thickens but still has some liquid, stirring occasionally. Serve warm or cold (it will thicken as it cools) over olive oil cake.

# Enjoy!



# Dirt

Witness the fermentation of my soul.

The building of my soil.

As the Winter consumes me, I fade into myself,

to feed myself.

As the Spring releases me, I emerge from myself,

to free myself.

And as the dried and scattered stalks and stems of myself

dissolve into myself,

I grow.

The fungus collects what the living no longer needs,

leaving nothing but naked nutrients,

leaving my shoots and leaves behind,

and redefining myself.

The presence of the dance.

The procession of the seasons.

The symmetrical and circular cycle of symbiosis.

Witnessed from a distance,

the decay is a beautiful unfolding,

a deviation from and reunion with perfection.

The ever blossoming lotus,

escaping from and returning to

where it came from:

Dirt.

# Olive Oil Cake with Apricot-Rhubarb Chutney

Adapted from Smitten Kitchen's Olive Oil Cake and The Perfect Pantry's Rhubarb-Apricot Chutney recipes. This is NOT a vegan, gluten free, or dairy free recipe, but it's awfully delicious, so please do with it what you will.

## Olive Oil Cake

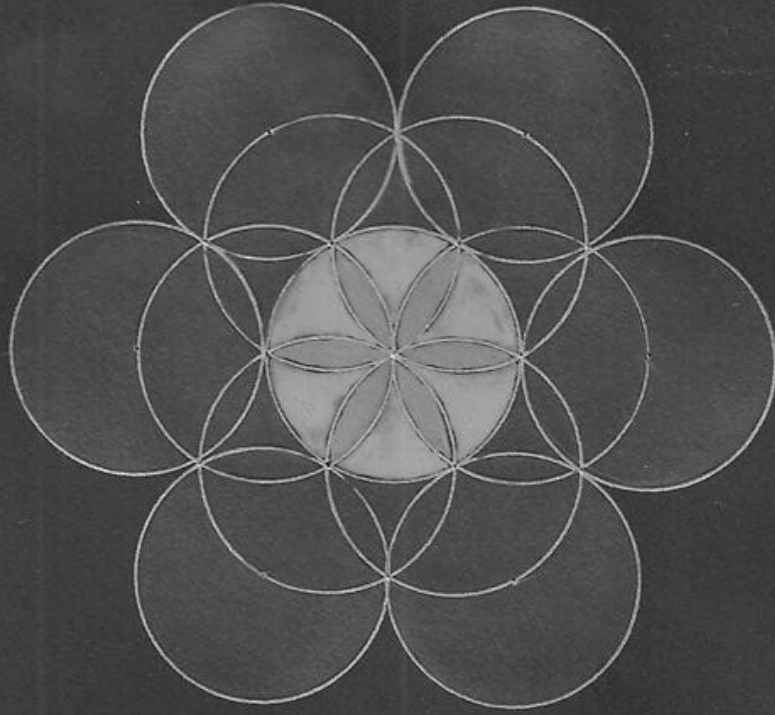
Butter for greasing the pan  
2 lemons  
1 cup (200 grams or 7 ounces) sugar  
Scant  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (118 ml) buttermilk or plain yogurt  
3 large eggs  
 $\frac{2}{3}$  cup (156 ml) extra virgin olive oil

1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups (219 grams or 7  $\frac{3}{4}$  ounces) all-purpose flour  
1  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons (8 grams) baking powder  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon baking soda  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt  
Whipped cream, for serving (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and butter a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan. Zest the lemons and add to the sugar in a bowl. Using your fingers, rub ingredients together until lemon zest is evenly distributed in sugar.

Juice the lemons: you should have about  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of liquid. Add enough buttermilk or yoghurt to make  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup of liquid altogether. Add to sugar and zest, and whisk thoroughly. Whisk in eggs and olive oil.

In another bowl, combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Fold the dry ingredients into the wet ones, working it until the batter is lump-free. Pour into prepared pan.



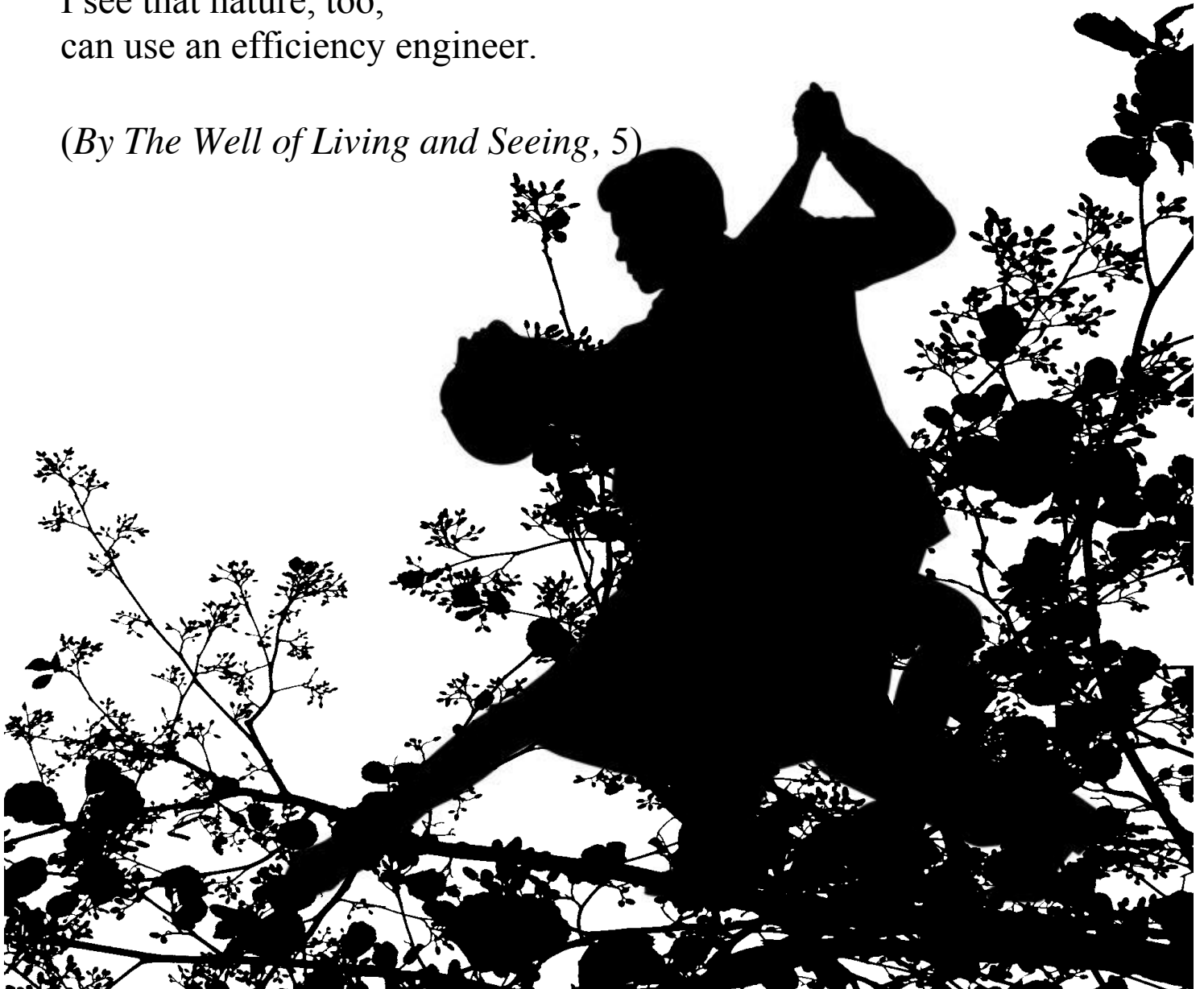
QUIET AND UNNOTICED  
THE FLOWER OF YOUR WHOLE LIFE  
HAS OPENED ITS PERFECT PETALS.

-WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

Spring has come again  
and with it the robins:  
the bird takes a few brisk steps,  
stops  
and lifts its head--  
a wasted motion!

You will never find a worm  
by looking up, my bird;  
I see that nature, too,  
can use an efficiency engineer.

*(By The Well of Living and Seeing, 5)*





# Composting!

From [http://eartheasy.com/grow\\_compost.html](http://eartheasy.com/grow_compost.html)

Just under the skin, in all those little capillaries, life is shaking itself into a frenzy. The heart beats fast and irregular. Dreams reach out to the waking time. Below the belt, under the feet and over the head: *s p r i n g*.

We are dancing when we toss seeds onto the ground, and when we move dead plants to the compost. This intricate dance between different life-forms takes place on the thresholds of death and birth. And while we are dancing, the whole time our planet revolves 'round the sun—it is in spring that our steps take on an extra intensity.

Dance in the spring light!  
Dance in the spring night!

...and remember:

The ecosystem dances into being, struggles and luxuriates, screams, moans and sighs. But it doesn't grow according to some blueprint, carried out in the spiritlessness of suburban development. Life lives out of joy and sorrow, finding what is useful along the way. So Avant-gardening is not only scientific, but also essentially artistic. *We celebrate theuselessness of the irreplaceable joy of life.* And so we don't forget this: we dance.

As we design our gardens and learn to make use of our fellow living beings, let us not turn them into pure instruments, but remember the light, ironic words of Charles Reznikoff:

The birds sing  
in the spring woods:  
here now, here now,  
here, here, here!

| Material                 | Carbon/<br>Nitrogen | Info   |
|--------------------------|---------------------|--|
| table scraps             | Nitrogen            | add with dry carbon items                            |
| fruit & vegetable scraps | Nitrogen            | add with dry carbon items                            |
| eggshells                | neutral             | best when crushed                                    |
| leaves                   | Carbon              | leaves break down faster when shredded               |
| grass clippings          | Nitrogen            | add in thin layers so they don't mat into clumps     |
| garden plants            | --                  | use disease-free plants only                         |
| lawn & garden weeds      | Nitrogen            | only use weeds which have not gone to seed           |
| shrub prunings           | Carbon              | woody prunings are slow to break down                |
| straw or hay             | Carbon              | straw is best; hay (with seeds) is less ideal        |
| green comfrey leaves     | Nitrogen            | excellent compost 'activator'                        |
| pine needles             | Carbon              | acidic; use in moderate amounts                      |
| flowers, cuttings        | Nitrogen            | chop up any long woody stems                         |
| seaweed and kelp         | Nitrogen            | apply in thin layers; good source for trace minerals |
| wood ash                 | Carbon              | only use ash from clean materials; sprinkle lightly  |
| chicken manure           | Nitrogen            | excellent compost 'activator'                        |
| coffee grounds           | Nitrogen            | filters may also be included                         |
| tea leaves               | Nitrogen            | loose or in bags                                     |
| newspaper                | Carbon              | avoid using glossy paper and colored inks            |
| shredded paper           | Carbon              | avoid using glossy paper and colored inks            |

# The Rocky Mountain Columbine

(*aquilegia saximontana*, if you want to look it up according to our contrived and ultimately arbitrary taxonomical ordering system) thrives in the Rocky Mountain tundra.

Zhe<sup>i</sup> has androgynous flowers, easing the reproductive process that is made difficult by inhospitable climates.

The spurs that stream behind the head of zher flowers fill with nectar that releases an irresistibly sweet aroma, calling loudly to the

few pollinators that can survive such thin

air. Zhe has a thin, flexible stem that

allows it to bow to the wind that

gathers in its petals. Sometimes referred to

as the Dwarf Blue Columbine, zhe, like most

other alpine plants, keeps a low-profile

with short stems and small leaves. Zhe

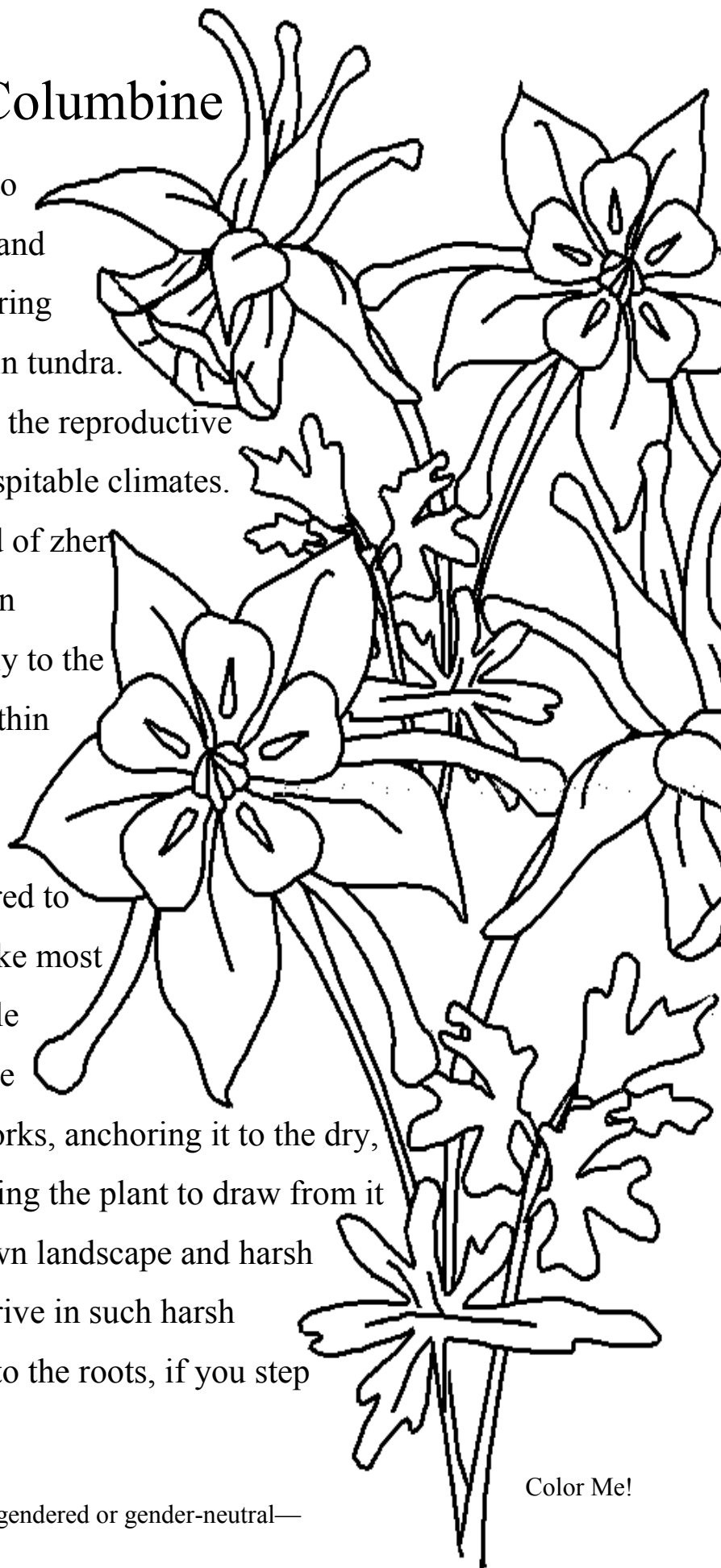
develops extensive fibrous root networks, anchoring it to the dry, rocky soil of zher habitat while allowing the plant to draw from it

enough water to survive the roughhewn landscape and harsh

climate. Yet despite zher ability to thrive in such harsh

conditions, zhe will likely die, down to the roots, if you step

on zhim.



Color Me!

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<sup>i</sup> A combo he-she—and thus, I would argue, not agendered or gender-neutral—pronoun that is currently gaining popularity.



|                      |        |   |
|----------------------|--------|---|
| cardboard            | Carbon | shred material to avoid matting                     |
| corn cobs, stalks    | Carbon | slow to decompose; best if chopped up               |
| dryer lint           | Carbon | best if from natural fibers                         |
| sawdust pellets      | Carbon | high carbon levels; add in layers to avoid clumping |
| wood chips / pellets | Carbon | high carbon levels; use sparingly                   |

- 1) Start your compost pile on bare earth. This allows worms and other beneficial organisms to aerate the compost and be transported to your garden beds.
- 2) Lay twigs or straw first, a few inches deep. This aids drainage and helps aerate the pile.
- 3) Add compost materials in layers, alternating moist and dry. Moist ingredients are food scraps, tea bags, seaweed, etc. Dry materials are straw, leaves, sawdust pellets and wood ashes. If you have wood ashes, sprinkle in thin layers, or they will clump together and be slow to break down.
- 4) Add manure, green manure (clover, buckwheat, wheatgrass, grass clippings) or any nitrogen source. This activates the compost pile and speeds the process along.
- 5) Keep compost moist. Water occasionally, or let rain do the job.
- 6) Cover with anything you have - wood, plastic sheeting, carpet scraps. Covering helps retain moisture and heat, two essentials for compost. Covering also prevents the compost from being over-watered by rain. The compost should be moist, but not soaked and sodden.

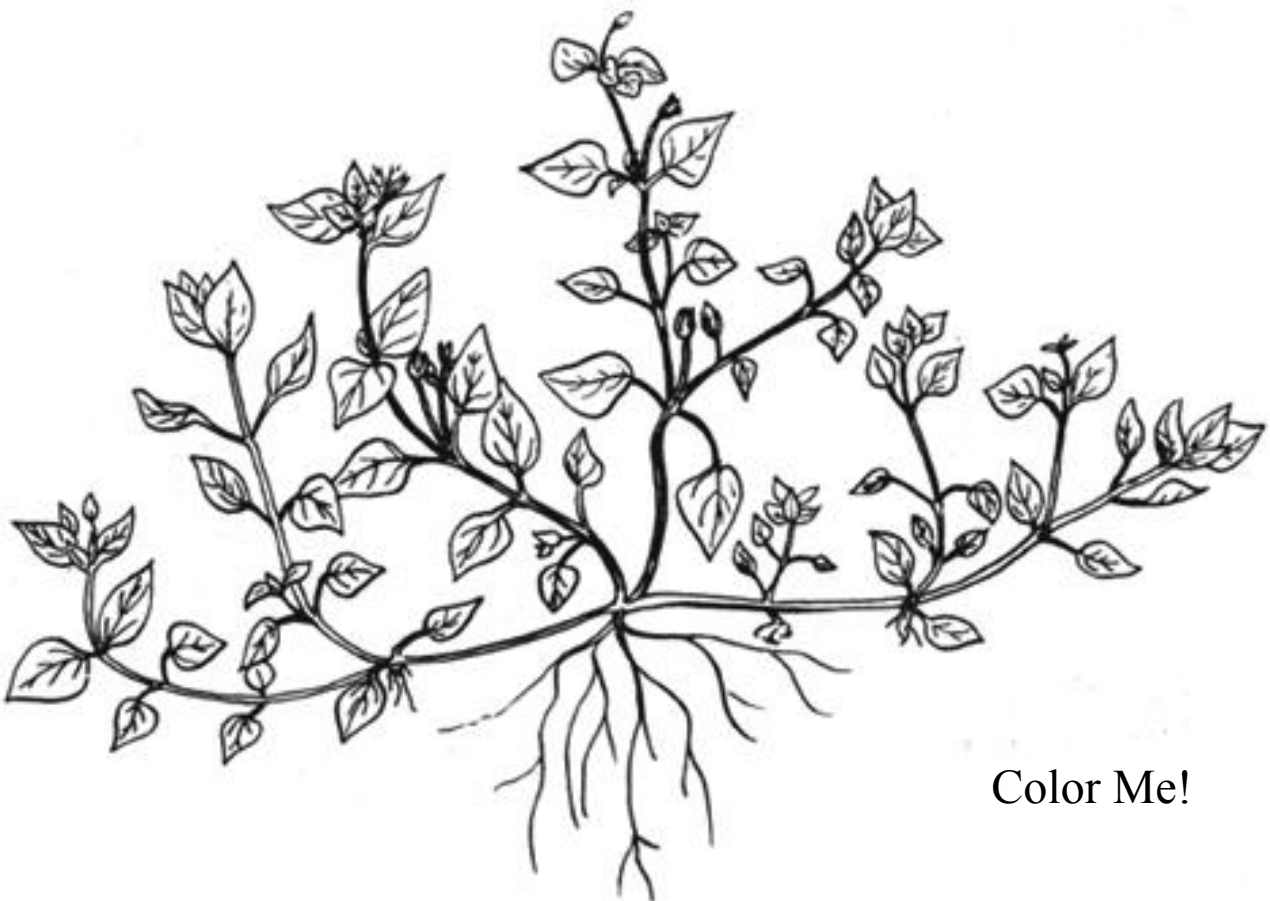
Turn. Every few weeks give the pile a quick turn with a pitchfork or shovel. This aerates the pile. Oxygen is required for the process to work, and turning "adds" oxygen. You can skip this step if you have a ready supply of coarse material, like straw.

# Chickweed

is the prolific little stuff with the tiny, ten petalled white flowers (really 5 petals but each petal is deeply divided, so it looks like 10 petals per 1cm flower). I have eaten all the similar plants with other sorts of flowers on them, with no ill results, but they don't taste as good as actual chickweed tastes. Use chickweed any way you would use spinach. Overdose is impossible. The plant is an enthusiastic local volunteer, often crowding the petunias out of the planters on the mall. To grow chickweed: water it often.

Andrew Cottrell, local Eugene student of plants and language

Chickweed is a nutritious diuretic. It replenishes the body with valuable trace minerals and vitamins as it flushes water weight from stored deposits. This herb was extremely popular for this use in the Victorian era. It was tucked into landscaping and eaten by the leisure



Color Me!

Once your compost pile is established, add new materials by mixing them in, rather than by adding them in layers. Mixing, or turning, the compost pile is key to aerating the composting materials and speeding the process to completion.

**Note:** If you want to buy a composter, rather than build your own compost pile, you may consider buying a rotating compost tumbler which makes it easy to mix the compost regularly.

## Carbon/Nitrogen Ratio

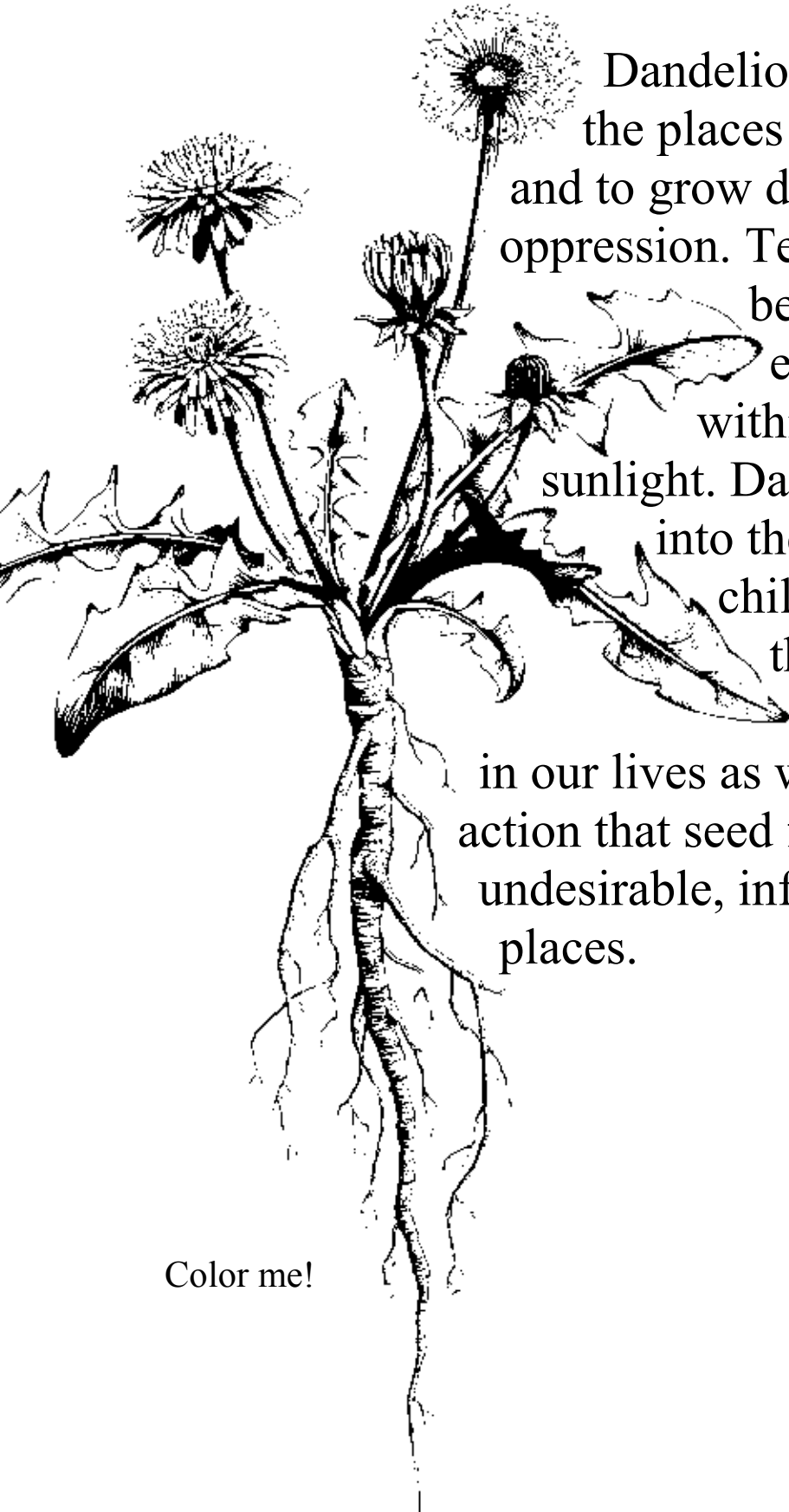
All compostable materials are either carbon or nitrogen-based, to varying degrees. The secret to a healthy compost pile is to maintain a working balance between these two elements.

**Carbon** - carbon-rich matter (like branches, stems, dried leaves, peels, bits of wood, bark dust or sawdust pellets, shredded brown paper bags, corn stalks, coffee filters, conifer needles, egg shells, straw, peat moss, wood ash) gives compost its light, fluffy body.

**Nitrogen** - nitrogen or protein-rich matter (manures, food scraps, green lawn clippings and green leaves) provides raw materials for making enzymes.

A healthy compost pile should have much more carbon than nitrogen. A simple rule of thumb is to use one-third green and two-thirds brown materials. The bulkiness of the brown materials allows oxygen to penetrate and nourish the organisms that reside there. Too much nitrogen makes for a dense, smelly, slowly decomposing anaerobic mass. Good composting hygiene means covering fresh nitrogen-rich material, which can release odors if exposed to open air, with carbon-rich material, which often exudes a fresh, wonderful smell. If in doubt, add more carbon!

# A Lesson From Nature



Dandelions teach us to grow in the places no one thinks possible, and to grow despite resistance and oppression. Teaching us to shine and be bold, living empowered from within—full of the color of sunlight. Dandelion also changes into the wishing wands of children, teaching us to use the transition of time, and every minor death in our lives as wishes, dreams, and action that seed forth in those undesirable, influential, and vital places.

Color me!