



Exploring a
Sense of Place

SEASONS

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A Sense of Place at Home

Exploring a Sense of Place focuses on getting to know one's bioregion. But that region doesn't need to be your entire watershed. Why not focus on your own backyard? Here is a look at a few gardens and what people have done to build community, raise awareness and bring their sense of place home.

A Place for Children

Executive Director Karen Harwell has turned her front garden into a haven for neighborhood children inadvertently. The front garden boasts an impressive

vegetable garden full of corn, beans, melons, tomatoes along with numerous fruit trees. The children who help Karen plant and care for everything have developed a real sense of ownership and pride in their garden. They drop by on a regular basis to see how the corn is coming along or to sample the plums ripening on the tree. All this involvement has fostered a great sense of belonging and neighborliness on Dana Avenue. Whenever Karen leaves town, she can be sure that someone is watching over the garden, house and the ducks.



Community Compost

Susan Osofsky and Christel Casjens have extended the idea of a neighborhood garden to include neighborhood composting. They allow all of their neighbors to take home plastic gallon buckets, fill them with food scraps, and return them. Susan and Christel then incorporate their neighbors' scraps in with their own food scraps and yard waste, and turn it into rich compost that nourishes their extensive vegetable garden. Neighborhood composting is not only a great way to grow a garden – it also brings everyone in the

neighborhood together and connects people with the food growing process.

The Urban Orchard

Twenty years ago when Tom and Judy Cronin (Program Directors) moved into their Redwood City home, there was an old Santa Rosa plum in the backyard, a Navel orange and an old lemon tree in the side yard. The rest of the yard was a



horticultural mess. Since then they have been in the process of transforming the 'yard' into an urban orchard. The orchard began with the addition of a Red Delicious apple, a Bartlett pear, and a mixed variety cherry tree in the backyard. Soon there after, their oldest daughter came home on Earth Day with a very small bare root fruit tree of unknown variety. This was planted front and center in the front yard and turned out to be a full size Blenheim apricot that now yields thousands of delicious apricots for their family, neighbors and friends. The orchard continued to expand with the addition of two Hass avocado trees and a small feijoa, also known as a Pineapple Guava, lime, mandarin orange, peach, nectarine, Bosc pear, Granny Smith apple and Black Mission fig. The

Redwood City urban orchard now holds 16 fruit trees. The next phase will be to add fruiting vines and bushes including kiwifruit, passion fruit, grapes and tree tomatoes. The goal of this urban orchard is to produce fresh, local, organic fruit every month of the year. It's well on the way to success!

Neighborhood Tree Planting

Jana Dilley (former Communications and Marketing Director) lives in a townhouse complex with a large amount of shared community space where neighbors have barbecue cookouts, visit around the swimming pool, and let kids run around. Over the past 3 years, they have been engaged in an effort to re-plant trees on the property. The existing trees are aging, and they wanted to make sure the property maintains a beautiful tree cover well into the future. Because the complex has a limited budget that needs to be stretched to cover many needs, the neighbors gathered to plant the trees themselves instead of hiring out the job. On two occasions, the neighbors got together on weekend mornings to dig deep into their shared earth and plant the trees that will benefit them all. Over 30 trees have been planted, giving the tree planters a sense of pride and stewardship. The shared activity of tree planting has also given the neighbors a chance to get to know each other and encouraged the growth of roots of the community in more than one way.



Dusk at Huckleberry Preserve

By Paul Belz

Soft throb of hidden crickets
Gentle caress from the magenta dusk
Evening's cool breath around my ear
Yes, sunset you drench us
With the color orange that vanishes
Like the flickering bats.
You call my daytime brain to rest.
No more classification or Latin names
For all the leaves, or comparison
Of the birds' sizes beaks and colors.
None of this matters when the owl
Offers its low repeated hum
And Venus forms itself from night's air.
Moon who hides, call my dreams awake.

Here's a few seasonal foods we can look forward to harvesting during the fall season:

- Artichokes
- Apples
- Wild mushrooms
- Persimmons
- Winter squash
- Sweet potatoes
- Pomegranates
- Quince
- Olives

Recommended Reading

As the days are getting shorter, we thought some good books may help you to fill the indoor dark hours by theoretically exploring a sense of place in the world of literature. So, curl up with a warm blanket on the increasingly cold porch outside or with a cup of hot chocolate next to the fireplace while enjoying one of the following recommendations from staff members:

Judy Cronin loves Ann Marie Brown's *101 great Hikes of the San Francisco Bay Area*

Using this book has inspired me to visit and explore many new parks in the area. The directions to the different parks work well and the fact that there is a time estimate for each hike allows you to choose a hike that fits into your day's plan. The majority of hikes are loop trails so you are always covering new ground and there is an informative description of the area you pass through.

Brigitte Fleeman loves Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*

"In this groundbreaking book, one of America's most fascinating, original, and elegant writers turns his own omnivorous mind to the seemingly straightforward question of what we should have for dinner. To find out, Pollan follows each of the food chains that sustain us—industrial food, organic or alternative food, and food we forage ourselves—from the source to a final meal, and in the process develops a definitive account of the American way of eating. His absorbing narrative takes us from Iowa cornfields to food-science laboratories, from feedlots and fast-food restaurants to organic farms and hunting grounds, always emphasizing our dynamic coevolutionary relationship with the handful of plant and animal species we depend on." From <http://www.michaelpollan.com/omnivore.php>

Karen Harwell loves Paul Hawken's *Blessed Unrest*

We are living in an awesome time when two remarkable developments are unfolding. One is the appearance of global systemic problems the scope of which humanity has never before been confronted with and concurrently the ever expanding formation of a worldwide movement that is determined *to heal the wounds of the earth with the force of passion, dedication, and collective intelligence and wisdom*. This movement spanning the Earth ranges from small neighborhood groups to well-funded international organizations and at current count these initiatives number over a million. *They share no unifying ideology; they follow no single charismatic leader; they remain supple enough to coalesce easily into larger networks to achieve their goals. While they are mostly ignored by politicians and the media, they are bringing about what may one day be judged the single most profound transformation of human society.* *Blessed Unrest* is the story of how people are using imagination, conviction and resilience to redefine our relationship within our Earth community with one another and all forms of life. This amazing account brings immense hope.

Joanna Reynolds loves Barbara Kingsolver, Camille Kingsolver and Steven Hopp's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*

I highly recommend this book about Barbara Kingsolver's family's adventurous year of eating only home-grown and local food. Written in her beautiful prose, the book is informative, entertaining, funny and inspirational. Her husband Steven Hopp contributes useful sidebars on ecology and industrial agriculture, and daughter Camille provides wonderful recipes for many of the meals they ate from their own garden. This well-researched book inspires in me a deeper appreciation for local, seasonal and organic food, and better understanding of why it is so important to our health and the health of the Earth. I recommend this book to anyone who eats.

Upcoming events:

Saturday, October 13, 9-3 pm: Life in an Estuary, Palo Alto Baylands

Saturday, November 10, 9-3 pm: Upper Watershed & Coastal Mountains, Huddart Park

Saturday, December 8, 9-3 pm: Creativity in Nature, Foothills Park

View the complete calendar at http://exploringsenseofplace.org/site/?page_id=4