

In the garden with Shobha Vanchiswar



Curl up in front of the holiday fire with a good, comprehensive book of weeds.
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Know thy weeds

Weeds

No one recalls inviting you

Too polite to call attention earlier,

I ask you now,

Who are you?

I've seen you everywhere

Mistaken you for the authentic

I am puzzled

How do you manage that?

You occupy prime real estate

I'm unable to evict you

I want you to leave

What will that take?

I've never led you on

My dislike has been obvious

Party crasher, con artist, squatter

Why do you torment me so?

Weeds have been defined as those plants that grow where they aren't wanted. There is no definite application to a type of plant or species of plants. Thus one gardener's choice plant could be another gardener's weed. Still, most of us agree on certain undesirables and recognize them as such wherever we see them.

I resent some weeds more than others. And I have a rather low tolerance for them in my flower and vegetable beds. However, in my "meadow," I freely permit the proliferation of what some gardeners absolutely cannot abide. Dandelions, clover, ajuga, wild strawberry and such are allowed to grow freely with what there is of the lawn grass along with the hundreds of bulbs that have been deliberately planted and left to naturalize.

In this part of my garden, I hope to add other plants that will make it more beautiful in a natural and organic manner. I'd like to encourage more native and helpful insect and bird populations as well. Already, I see how a meadow can be polarizing. Those who insist upon pristine lawns abhor this concept while the rest strive to create a balance in the environment as well as the conscience. That's a topic for discussion best left for another time.

Although I am able to recognize and eliminate common weeds, it has always bothered me that I don't know them very well. Understanding each type of weed would certainly help in how I deal with and, hopefully, get rid of them. Who knows? I might grow a new found respect for some and make friends of them! I see clearly that it is but ignorance that makes me discriminate against certain plants.

I have therefore resolved to learn my weeds. This winter, along with perusing the seed catalogs, I'm going to study weeds. To that end, there is just the right book available. "Weeds of the Northeast" put out by Comstock Books (~\$30) is going to be my teacher.

So come spring, I shall know better mine enemy, the weeds. And thus perhaps will I know myself better as well.