Stewardship, Gardening, and Restoration: Metaphors and Ethics in the Anthropocene

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Are you interested in environmental history, labor, and where those Valentines’ day roses have been?

Are you curious about Kenya and the complexities of sustainable development?
Let’s start with a poem

Author: Christienne Hinz, PhD in Japanese History, Assoc. Prof. SIUE

Ecosystem Garden Blogger: https://shonufforganics.wordpress.com

Poem
“Nature is Where You are Standing”

Christienne’s daughter (my niece) with dog and carrots
Words Matter

“What is wrong with this Native Gardening book title?”

Historian/Anthropologist: “Um......Colonialism?”
Wilderness metaphor - history

• The Trouble with Wilderness (*Cronon 1995*)
  • Need to “rethink wilderness”
  • False “dualism” of viewing species differently depending on where they are

• Many have pointed out that wilderness implies lack of human presence (*Pollan 1991, Adamson 2011, Marris 2011*)

• Humans seen only as negative influence on nature.

• However, Leopold and others have challenged this “wilderness is relative.”
“The tree in the garden is in reality no less other, no less worthy of our wonder and respect, than the tree in an ancient forest that has never known an ax or a saw—even though the tree in the forest reflects a more intricate web of ecological relationships. The tree in the garden could easily have sprung from the same seed as the tree in the forest, and we can claim only its location and perhaps its form as our own. Both trees stand apart from us; both share our common world. The special power of the tree in the wilderness is to remind us of this fact. It can teach us to recognize the wildness we did not see in the tree we planted in our own backyard. By seeing the otherness in that which is most unfamiliar, we can learn to see it too in that which at first seemed merely ordinary.”

William Cronon, 1995
Two books, separated by two decades (Pollan 1991, Marris 2011)

Gardens, Wilderness, and the Wild
“The idea of a garden – as a place both real and metaphorical, where nature and culture can be wedded in a way that benefits both—may be as useful to us today as the idea of wilderness has been in the past.”

Michael Pollan

“Gardening has become unavoidable even in those places we wish to be monuments to our absence.”

Michael Pollan

“How do we hide 235,000 species in a garden? By recognizing and relabeling wildland nature as a garden per se, having all the traits that we have long bestowed on a garden – care, planning, investment….

What does the wildland garden grow? It grows wilds. It grows ecosystem services and biodiversity services”

Dan Janzen 1998

What is Wild Gardening?
A garden implies a gardener....

“If gardening provides a model for a healthy relationship with nature, then restoration is that form of gardening concerned specifically with the gardening, maintenance, and reconstitution of wild nature”

William R. Jordan III
“Sunflower Forest”: Ecological Restoration as the Basis for a New Environmental Paradigm, p 18

Perhaps gardeners are needed to preserve “untrammeled” wilderness
A garden implies a gardener….

“Mainstream environmentalism often treats nature more like a wilderness where humans are intruders than like a garden where humans are an active and appropriate part of nature”

Adamson 2001

“American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice and Ecocriticism.”

UIS Conservation Biology students planting pecan trees
A garden implies a gardener...

“Nature as garden is an especially challenging metaphor for wild animals... Can large animals survive in human-occupied forest?

There is no single gardener at Tambopata; rather there are multiple gardeners who often have conflicting interests.”

Lisa Naughton-Treves 2002

“Wild Animals in the Garden: Conserving Wildlife in Amazonian Agroecosystems.”
What would a healthy garden look like?

“What is mistaken and insidious in its effect is the confusion of cultural perception with ecological function.

Landscape ecologists need to know that the cultural perception of nature is independent of ecological function.”

Joan Naussauer 1995

“Culture and changing landscape structure.”
What process should we use? Whose views are valid?

Pollan and Jordan – democratic process will produce good outcomes

Throop – need to have experts assigned like in medicine

Whose expertise counts?
Claims to territory

Elizabeth Garland’s “Elephant in the Room” – Colonialism

Displacement of people from their ancestral lands in the name of conservation

Who bares the cost? Who gets the benefit?
Kaebnick (2017) outlines 6 potential ethical systems

Spectrum from garden worship to techno-garden (de-extinctions and more)

Leopold’s land ethic is middle path- “steward’s gardening ethic.”
“This, to many biocentric thinkers, and to me, is the primary moral duty: stop extinctions. Call it stewardship, call it gardening, call it what you will. It is our job.”

Emma Marris

Humility in the Anthropocene (2015)
Summary of metaphor’s pros and cons

Pros
• Fosters stewardship ethic
• People as part of nature
• Implies investment
• Inclusive and broadens approaches
• Management friendly

Cons
• Risk to undesirable species (large carnivores)
• Complexity of authority
• Arrogance
• Ethical slippery slope
What is our role in nature? Beyond dualistic thinking
The Middle Path


• “A thing is right only when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the community, and the community includes the soil, waters, fauna and flora, as well as the people.” Leopold 1947 Garden Club Bulletin
What might wild gardening look like?

• Cultivating the wild
• Goal is preserving global biodiversity not simplifying systems
• Embracing Leopold’s Stewardship ethic
• Remaining humble and acknowledging system complexity
• Expanding our notions of who is an expert
What might this look like in practice?
1 Council Ring 1
2 Council Ring 2
3 Council Ring 3
4 Council Ring 4 — Lincoln Council Ring
5 Council Ring 5
6 Council Ring 6
7 Council Ring 7
8 Council Ring 8
9 Cypress Grove
10 Nature Center and Split Rail Shop
11 Walgreens Bridge
12 Ostermeier Prairie Center Barn and Greenhouse
13 Wildlife viewing area at Ostermeier Pond
14 Tall prairie grass
15 Historic Chippewa Oak with plaque from the Bicentennial Society of Arboriculture
A living memorial to Lincoln

- Lincoln Memorial Garden, Springfield IL
- Local Garden Club campaign, spearheaded by Harriet Knudson
- Designed by landscape architect Jens Jensen
  - Native plantings starting in 1936 (wildflowers, shrubs, white oaks)
  - Acorns mailed to Knudson from garden clubs throughout the U.S.
“I know of no idea more noble or more fitting as a memory for our Great American than a garden. Monuments and statuary are but cold material. Growing things are life – eternal youth.”

Jens Jensen
Aesthetics implicit in design (Dogwood lane, Red bud lane)

Council rings throughout

Naturalist to manage site hired in the 1970s

Prairie restoration areas added in the 1990s
Do users think of the area as a garden?

• Semi-structured interviews were conducted summer of 2019 (n=11)

• Managers do as they are heavily involved in management and working to keep Jensen’s design elements

• Volunteers and visitors, however, do not
“‘I don’t think of it as a garden because I am also a traditional gardener . . . I think of it as like a mini park forest preserve. . . I think [in] calling it a garden, people who come and visit who'd never been there before, they’re a little shocked. . . You think about cultivated flower beds and flowering shrubs.’

Lincoln Memorial Garden Volunteer
However, they appreciate the design/management

• Jens Jensen- Prairie Style of Landscape Architecture, early advocate for native plantings

• Trails of flowering trees, vistas, curved trails to provide privacy, woodchip trails

• Management and design enhances intergenerational volunteers
Can we garden well?

- **Local, site-specific goals that celebrate local natural and cultural history**

- **Wild gardening** – positive human agency, fusion of natural and cultural goals, deepen our understanding of our role as stewards

- **Welcoming metaphor** – emphasis on type of human interaction not human displacement

- **But** we need to remain humble and insist on certain outcomes such as preserving threatened species
“Though we may be the earth’s gardeners we are also its weeds. And we won’t get anywhere until we come to terms with this crucial ambiguity about our role – that we are at once the problem and the only possible solution to the problem”

From Second Nature, Michael Pollan
Take advice from those who have gardened well….

We Rise Together
Achieving Pathway to Canada Target 1 through the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the spirit and practice of reconciliation
ONLY YOU
Can Prevent a
Sixth Mass Extinction

Questions?


