



FRUITION SEEDS

ORGANIC SEED *for the* NORTHEAST

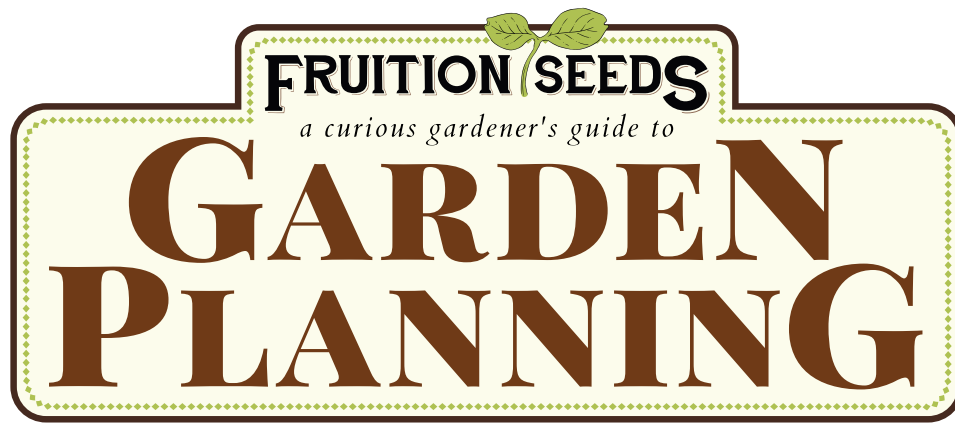


a curious gardener's guide to
**GARDEN
PLANNING**

journeying with ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

GROWING OUR GARDENS
GROWING OURSELVES

February 2021



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WELCOME!

What if our gardens grow us more than we grow them?

Growing Ourselves is an invitation to cultivate so much more than carrots.

As we grow alongside our gardens, we offer this guide to you, celebrating the wisdom of plants as well as Robin Wall Kimmerer. Accompanied by questions and experiences to dig deeper, we hope to nourish your personal imagination as well as those you love. Around your dinner table, on a hike with a friend, with your wider community and in those precious moments when you have a moment with yourself, may this invitation amplify the beauty and abundance of us all for generations to come.

LET'S DIG IN

"To name the world as a gift is to feel one's membership in the web of reciprocity."

- ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

As we plan our gardens and dream of abundance to come, dominant culture feeds us these common questions: What do I want to grow? If I want 40 quarts of tomato sauce, how many tomatoes do I need to plant? How do I prevent disease? And keep out the rabbits?

Perhaps there is another way to begin.

What if we focused our efforts and energy on not only the logistics of *how* to grow a garden, but also on the questions of *why*, *with whom*, and *for whom*?

In this spirit, thanks for joining us as we lean into the words of **Robin Wall Kimmerer**, a mother, plant ecologist, author of *Braiding Sweetgrass*, professor & brilliant indigenous voice. Friends, let's read and reflect on her remarkable essay *The Serviceberry: An Economy of Abundance* together.

In *The Serviceberry*, Robin invites us to reimagine the abundance of the Earth as gifts rather than objects to possess. How does this shift the way we plan our gardens? Instead of simply asking, "What do I want to harvest from my garden?", what if we asked, "How can this garden nourish and inspire our community?"

Robin helps us notice we have a crucial choice to make: we can accept what we've been told about the world (that economies are built on scarcity, that competition should drive interaction), or, as she suggests, we can build our lives around a different kind of economy, one founded on abundance and reciprocity. There are many lessons the serviceberry teaches us. What lessons are most present for you, as you read *The Serviceberry*?

READ & REFLECT

The Serviceberry: An Economy of Abundance

by Robin Wall Kimmerer

(Read this essay at <https://emergencemagazine.org/story/the-serviceberry/>)

What a gift to savor *The Serviceberry* and what a gift to share it! We'll always be so grateful for all of Robin's remarkable writings in our lives and what a gift to begin *Growing Our Gardens*, *Growing Ourselves* with her words. When we wrote to Robin, sharing our vision & asking to share her essay with you, she responded:

Thanks for writing! The Serviceberry is meant to be shared and to catalyze a different kind of thinking; I like very much the way you're incorporating it into reflection and practice of gardening.

For the seeds,

Robin

Thanks again for this opportunity to learn, unlearn, see and dream anew, Robin. For the seeds, indeed! Just like our gardens, you've grown us more than we will ever know.



Robin Wall Kimmerer (photo by Dale Kakkak)

AMPLIFYING ABUNDANCE

Explore any & all of these activities to experience garden planning anew.

Make Your Garden More Than Yours

In a gift economy, the opportunity of abundance is to give it away, Robin observes. She illustrates this with the story of a hunter who shares meat with his community. “You can store your meat in your own pantry or in the belly of your brother,” she says. “Both have the result of keeping hunger at bay but with very different consequences for the people and for the land which provided that sustenance.”

In this spirit, we invite you to find a friend or neighbor that has been a gift in your life. In the spirit of reciprocity, offer to grow a section of your garden for them! You’ll plant and weed,

you’ll care for these plants entirely, offering the abundance as a way of saying thanks for what they mean to you. Ask them what they would love to receive from you, as a gift. Tomatoes? Zinnias? Anything goes!

Reflecting on your experience, how did it feel to offer your garden gifts? Was it easy, was it difficult? Did other concerns or opportunities arise? Did it bring up any memories for you? How do you imagine your generosity has changed or will change you and your friend as well as your community?

Say Thank You to The Earth!

Robin writes that receiving a gift elicits a response of gratitude. With our fellow humans, we show gratitude with our words and with acts of reciprocity. How can we thank the planet that is our home? Saying thank you to the earth is not part of our dominant culture, all too often.

Let’s find our own ways to say thank you for all the gifts the earth surrounds us with. Maybe it’s creating your own family thanksgiving ritual? Maybe it’s about “paying it forward” and giving some of your favorite seeds as a new year’s gift to family and friends. Maybe it’s taking some of those jars from your fall canning efforts and donating them to a local food pantry or homeless shelter. Or maybe it’s even,

as Robin suggests, singing “a song of thanks that sends appreciation out on the wind.” The goal is to figure out what exactly is “your” way of saying thanks to the earth.

Along the way and afterward, give some thought to how this changes your experience of partaking in the food you are received from the earth. Also spend some time thinking about how your garden planning might change. What might it mean to plan a garden in a way that leaves room for saying thank you or paying it forward? What would it mean to see your garden planning as “an act of gratitude”? What plants might you dry and place on an altar? Listen closely for the ways your joyful gratitude inspires reciprocity.

Sharing Your Space

Robin begins her essay by painting a picture for the reader. As she picks and eats handfuls of serviceberries, she enjoys the company of birds who are also feasting on the fruits.

Oftentimes, we approach the presence of other living beings in our gardens with a mindset of deterrence and a goal of protecting our harvest for ourselves.

Take a walk around your neighborhood and observe – where do you see signs of the abundance of the Earth being experienced or shared by other living beings?

As you notice these relationships outside of your garden, reflect – in what ways can you view your garden this season with an attitude of sharing the harvest with the more-than-human beings in your community?

INCLUDING ALL AGES

Visitors as Gifts & Gifts for Visitors

What a gift, gardening with children! People often include children in garden planning with questions such as, *What do you love to eat? What is your favorite flower? What plants would you love to play under?*

What happens when you ask these questions?

- Who are our favorite visitors in the garden, both in our human family and wider ecological family?
- What can we plant as gifts for the birds, for the frogs, for the soil, for the earth?
- What can we plant as gifts for our neighbors?
- What can we plant to honor a family member no longer with us?
- How can we plan our garden to help visitors feel more welcome?
- Who do we know who will appreciate a gift the most? What can we plant for them?
- Is there a special meal we can imagine sharing with a special friend? What can we grow ourselves for that meal?
- What will be a joyful challenge for us to grow?

CULTIVATING QUESTIONS

Good questions, like good seeds, create more of themselves. Inspired by the words of Robin Wall Kimmerer, explore any and all of these questions that call to you, reflecting on your own as well as in the company of those you love, as you feel moved. Trusting our gardens grow us more than we grow them, what is your garden asking of you right now?

1. When have you experienced the most generosity? When have you been the most generous?

How can your garden planning pay this generosity forward (to delight someone who isn't anticipating it) or backward (to delight someone you're hungry to thank)?

2. What are your favorite ways to say thank you, and what are your favorite ways to be thanked?

How do you imagine your plants would love to be thanked? Hummingbirds? Bumble bees? How can you plan to thank them?

3. When you step back and honestly look at your life, how much of it is driven by a fear of scarcity and how much by the trust in abundance?

Are there any plants in your garden that represent scarcity or abundance for you?

4. In your family of origin, were you taught that life was a journey surrounded by abundance or path threatened by scarcity? How are you currently living into, adapting & transforming these stories?

How can you plan for and nourish a garden, imagining yourself as a good ancestor?

5. How has your trust in the gifts of the Earth changed as you've gotten older?

How can your garden planning reflect the wisdom of your lived experience & the experiences you dream of?

6. Has the idea of self-sufficiency and talk of "your" garden limited the potential of the garden you plant? What would change if you thought of "your garden" as "our garden"? Who does "our" bring to mind for you?

Who in your immediate community would benefit most from the gifts of your garden? How can you plan your garden to bestow such gifts? Consider beings with two legs, four legs, hundreds of legs and no legs!

❧ LET'S GO DEEPER ❧

*As we sit with and sink into Robin's words, what might unfold in our living and loving?
As always, explore any & all of these questions that call to you.*

"I think that the Serviceberries show us another model, one based upon reciprocity rather than accumulation, where wealth and security come from the quality of your relationships, not from the illusion of self-sufficiency. Without gift relationships with bees and birds, Serviceberries would disappear from the planet. Even if they hoarded abundance, perching atop the wealth ladder, they would not save themselves from the fate of extinction if their partners did not share in that abundance. Hoarding won't save us either. All flourishing is mutual."

- Where in your life have you struggled with trusting Nature's gifts? And trusting in Life's gifts?
- When have you acted as though hoarding would save you from suffering?
- What life choices or personal practices help you resist this message?
- Who has helped you look at life differently?
- When has freely giving of yourself "healed you"?

"There is no question but that all living beings experience some level of scarcity at various points, and therefore that competition for limited resources, like light or water or soil nitrogen, will occur. But since competition reduces the carrying capacity for all concerned, natural selection favors those who can avoid competition. Oftentimes this is achieved by shifting one's needs away from whatever is in short supply, as though evolution were suggesting "if there's not enough of what you want, then want something else." This specialization to avoid scarcity has led to a dazzling array of biodiversity, each avoiding competition by being different."

- How might your living and loving be enriched by shifting your attention and effort away from what is in short supply to what is readily available?
- As you plan your garden, what might you grow that will entice yourself and others away from what is in short supply?



WORDS TO CARRY WITH US

a final invitation from Robin to send us on our way

“I cherish the notion of the gift economy, that we might back away from the grinding market economy that reduces everything to a commodity and leaves most of us bereft of what we really want: relationship and purpose and beauty and meaning, which can never be commoditized. I want to be part of a system in which wealth means having enough to share, and where the gratification of meeting your family needs is not poisoned by destroying that possibility for someone else. I want to live in a society where the currency of exchange is gratitude and the infinitely renewable resource of kindness, which multiplies every time it is shared rather than depreciating with use.”

– ROBIN WALL KIMMERER



About Robin

A mother, plant ecologist, author and professor, **Robin Wall Kimmerer** weaves indigenous wisdom and scientific knowledge, transforming herself and us all in the process. A member of the Citizen Band Potawatomi, Robin is a Distinguished Teaching Professor of Environmental Biology at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, New York. She is also the founding Director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, whose mission is to create programs that draw on the wisdom of both indigenous and scientific knowledge for our shared concerns for Mother Earth.

If you're hungry for more of Robin's words and worlds, dive into her numerous scientific articles as well as two remarkable books. Her first, *Gathering Moss*, will forever shift the way you see the world beneath your feet. Her second, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, is one of our favorite books of all time. Robin's interview on the *On Being* podcast, *The Intelligence of Plants*, is a sweet and soaring hour to immerse yourself in.

Robin lives on an old farm in upstate New York, tending gardens both cultivated and wild.



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