

Dialogue with Plants

Inspired by Vaughn Bell's Plantscapes at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

David Haley 2021

Spring Arrives

and then it was spring
winter gave way to new life
leaves bud and plants grow

with the morning star
salute to the sun, chi flows
blackbird sings the day

river meanders
salt and sweet play together
tides mix and mingle

as Earth warms, mists rise
dewdrop on a blade of grass
sky brightens, clouds pass

disturb the quiet
connecting from here to there
only the airplanes

an intervention
in the gardens of empire
new plant colonies

the way we see things
some changes of perception
then to see anew

art planting culture
some questions of extinction
endangered landscapes

bedtime for badgers
worms surface to a shower
blackbird has breakfast

under the **Green Roofs**
near to the Riverside Palace
young voices at play

alpines grow above
time to grow in the garden
dens to hide and seek

having so much fun
saxifrage blooms in the sun
out in the open

games that children play
grasses to touch, stroke and poke
not like precious Art

rainwater buffer
city dwellers habitat
purifies the air

reduce temperature
for biodiversity
green environment

photosynthesis
cutting carbon dioxide
produce oxygen

precipitation
slowing down rainwater's flow
stormwater retained

decrease urban heat
evaporate and transpire
plants work with water

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Meadows and Marshes

botanic geographies
a great piece of turf

native wildflowers
Royal Conservatory
weeds take center stage

here bird's foot trefoil
what do we have in common?
there greater burnet

some common knapweed
marsh marigold, false fox sedge
clustered bellflower

purple loosestrife
meadow sweet, meadow cranesbill
dotted loosestrife

sainfoin, fox and cubs
common toadflax, yellow flag
hare's-tail cotton grass

there's meadow clary
bog rosemary, globeflower
and water avens

dreams of summers past
wild moments in wildflowers
by soggy wetlands

mists deceive the eye
spectre of ghostly delights
just Will-o'-the-wisp?

across the **Moorlands**

from ancient seas to limestone
sphagnum moss and peat

bleak, windswept hill brows
exposed to the elements
sanctuary dales

extreme environs
life supports systems to grow
rocks and crags avail

glimpses of elsewhere
paid good money for these weeds
Bronte's dreams come true

afraid of showing
our season is pretty short
coming on too soon

nothing to be seen
suddenly on the moorland
burst into colour

common cotton grass
common heather and harebell
common butterwort

devil's scabious
blue moor grass and bearberry
gorse and bilberry

see the crowberry
purple and blue moor grasses
common butterwort

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Summer Lingers

and then comes summer
so, spring gave way to new growth
leaves spread flowers bloom

I love working here
a great place for a lunch break
beats office working

this place is peaceful
no sirens, crime, or stabbings
not like where I live

being eccentric
I like to engage people
from staring at screens

work in Parliament
apart from this summer job
I perform to kids

greenhouse orient
occidental happening
to global warning

the realm of knowledge
imperial specimens
sovereign power rules

decolonizing
learning to plant more questions
domains of commons

bee collects pollen
caterpillar eats a leaf
blackbird enjoys lunch

a **Woodland** clearing
steamy times in the Palm House
cool breeze off the Thames

catching the sunlight
trunk, branches, canopy, sky
shimmer in a breeze

high winds in April
pioneer trees, shallow soils
enough roots to hold

hart's tongue fern and birch
there's lady fern and male fern
giant bellflower

spurge laurel, wood spurge
stinking iris, herb Robert
spindle and ivy

wild honeysuckle
wood cranesbill, a great wood rush
and ragged robin

hard fern and hazel
Welsh poppy and wild cherry
wood sage and bugle

birch and field maple
a common dog violet
wood sage and bugle

wild cherry is here
lesser periwinkle there
bluebells awaiting

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by **Coastal Sand Dunes**

along Victoria Walk
search for sea holly

empires come and go
sharing common wealth
this domain of plants

consider a cliff
you end up with a high wall
beaches by the sea

the lands of others
territories beyond us
colonies rebel

rising seas erode
shifting, reforming elsewhere
sand blows with the wind

dynamic dunescapes
sand dunes are being fenced off
your bucket and spade

in sheltered hollows
bumble bees and butterflies
natterjack toads too

here's creeping willow
lyme grass and viper's burgloss
marram grass and thrift

sea campion
bloody cranesbill, sea aster
sea buckthorn, sea kale

birds nest in **Hedgerows**

they hide from their predators
blackbird makes a home

wrens, robins, dunnocks
nightingale from Africa
grey partridge, whitethroat

sparrows and finches
yellow hammers fly around
willow warblers

blue tit and bullfinch
a linnet and a kestrel
then two turtle doves

yarrow, cow parsley
and nettle-leaved bellflower
hart's tongue fern, ivy

grey sedge and foxglove
Queen Anne's lace is wild carrot
hedge bedstraw, soapwort

hornbeam, field maple
hard shield fern and white willow
yellow archangel

hawthorn and blackthorn
there's white and red campion
periwinkle too

stitchwort is in there
betony and hedge woundwort
hedgehog sleeps by day

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Autumn Leaves

and then comes autumn
summer gave way to decay
leaves drop and roots spread

people want action
they say that plants are boring
you plant them and wait

it can be hard work
preparing for seed magic
then you see them sprout

plant kingdom reigns here
botanic dominion
taxonomies branch

looking and seeing
plants at each person's level
vistas giving way

shifting perspective
a close-up panorama
wonderment focused

everyday dreams
for extraordinary times
commonplace wonder

winter stopover
a cacophonous gaggle
Canada geese land

blackbird sings the day
poops a seed or two, then flies
and the sun will set