

About

Gardening with Nature

The fresh smell and prickly feel make me want to stay on my spongy pine needle bed for just a while longer, but the late afternoon light reminds me that I will be missed. I am eleven years old and have ridden my bicycle two miles from home to a small, rarely used park. Though I am young I know my mother would not be pleased if she found out that I spent hours in this secluded spot. But this is my own special hideaway, a place to imagine explorations and adventures, a place to think about life, a place to be alone and content. More than forty years later I still savor that time. I can almost see, hear, smell and feel it. I remember promising myself that I would always seek out places like this, places with the correct mix of isolation, peace, adventure and even danger. And to this day, it guides my gardening efforts. I attempt to re-create that neglected and natural, yet cared for outdoors.

Ideally, it is a secret garden full of brambles and vines that I subdue but never tame. It is full of interesting sounds: a lizard scampering under a rock, a large pre-historic-looking beetle humming along, a delicate phoebe chirping as it catches insects in mid air, my own foot steps crunching leaves as I walk along. The spicy aroma of wild sage hangs in the air. The comforting warm brown of leaf mulch, the restful green of trees, and the occasional bright accents of red, yellow or white flowers entertain my eyes. It has enough privacy to allow me to hear my inner voice. Each time I open the gate to my secret garden, I take a deep breath, exhale and relax. And this is all I need to know about gardens and gardening.

Wild Suburbia can exist anywhere. It is a way of gardening and a frame of mind, a step back to what once was, and a step forward to what can be. It starts with the introduction of locally native plants and the exclusion of toxins, and grows to be a peaceful, yet wild place. This website contains resources on habitat gardening, and a blog that follows the progress of my Southern California Wild Suburbia.