

Pacific Northwest Nature Garden

Spending time in the Pacific Northwest provides an important contrast to my Southern California Wild Suburbia. Wild Suburbia is sunny, hot, and dry. It is aromatic, gray and tan. The sun is strong and bright, even harsh. The Pacific Northwest has its own magic. It is a land of tall trees, ferns, and mosses. Sunlight penetrating the leaves and branches of trees dances on the ground during the day, and peaks through the straight trunks at dusk.

My Dream Garden

My dream garden is one that feels at home. Some people say it provides a sense of place. Though it may require lots of care, it looks like it takes almost none. Plants grow with little supplemental inputs since they are adapted to the conditions of the garden. It is a habitat garden, friendly to birds, insects, lizards, and people.

Whether I am here or in So Cal, I am always on the look out for the gardening style that speaks to me, touches me. I try to sense the essence of the land. This includes what the land once was when cared for by more responsible people, and what it has become in our post-wild world.

Orcas Charm

In August we went on the [Orcas Island Artists' Studio Tour](#). I fell in love with the garden of the last site that we visited. The moment I stepped into the garden I felt at home. It was not a copy of the nearby [Turtleback Mountain Preserve](#), though it shared many elements. As in the preserve, there were massive trees, rocks covered with dried mosses, and tawny grasses and forbs turning brown at the end of this dry summer. In addition, one could see the gentle hand of the gardener/artist who nurtures this special place.

The gardener artfully placed drift wood, collected during coastal cleanups, into the landscape. Some pieces looked like seals basking in the sun on rocky outcrops, others invited a wanderer to sit and take in Nature's beauty. Shells outlined paths, and swirled in spirals reminiscent of the recent solar eclipse. Other interesting objects, like a rusty bed frame, were used to create vertical structures that plants could wind through. The garden was playful, yet respectful.

Here are a few pictures I took while wondering through the sloped garden. Unfortunately I only had my iPhone camera, so I was unable to capture the light as well as I might have. Nevertheless, I hope these convey the charm of this garden.