

Ode to Trees

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I love trees—the trusty plant can brighten my low-spirited and dull days. For that trees more than provide; they guide. I notice them at every place. Trees are steady; they never change.

Observance of the free, billowing, friendly trees which stand beyond my view regardless of rain or shine bestows quiet wisdom, peace, and comforting friendship. Beautifully tall, sturdy bunches of trees rest like patient people in a long line at a store past the outside my window, quietly living despite standing still. In my backyard, birds of varying kinds perch on the branches of strong cedar trees. Yesterday there was a single bluebird upon the limbs of the tree. Today there are many. Often, I realize from observation, the birds will have ventured to soar above the various trees. *Acer palmatum* stands in a bed of pine straw in the middle of spacious grass between houses. *Quercus* blooms around it, spread out amid the lawn. Small flecks of green sway gently from the ends of its long limbs. Leaves—the food source for trees—fall onto the blades of vibrant grass, floating to extend across the turf to lie gently in a wide array upon the grass, upon the roofs of neighboring houses, upon the pavement.

“Nourish Me!” I say to myself as I watch the lovely tree that has been swaying during several bursts of wind. The sun must have forgotten to shine its light today. I don’t resist stopping to let the shawl-like breeze pass over us.

Occasionally, while living at my childhood home, I gazed upon a pond that dwelled across the street from my house. Its tranquil waters were often the comforting home to geese, even though they encountered predators like foxes and often were intruded upon by noisy, reckless golfers with varying degrees of success in hitting their target. The small pond was so surrounded that it rarely kept the little goslings from encountering golf balls that skimmed at the surface. Such frequent nuisance was oddly comforting but still annoying. A rugged tree acted as shade on the water, as covering for the geese. I was content to watch this small section of life, happy a piece of the world provided harmony, beauty, and activity. Though I no longer live at that place, I remember the view of the tree on the pond. I imagine the shine of the sun, close my eyes, and wistfully reminisce about the reflections of the tree on the pond.

Thinking about the wonderous legions of trees that stand gallantly outside my window, I nevertheless worry about

their future, a bright future that is dampened by the effects of climate change. So often there are distressing tales of the loss of trees and the destruction of forests; I wonder if these magnificent creations of nature that have always surrounded us will be damaged beyond repair.

This past year, wildfires spread throughout the New South Wales region of Australia and burned up to 11 million hectares of land. The fire’s mass destruction meant that firefighters from Australia and around the world needed to come and help get rid of the deadly flames. Persistent heat and droughts helped exacerbate the fires, and climate change made it worse.

When I was younger, my family and I would travel to see my grandparents in a small town in South Georgia. Frequently, in the car, I’d look out the window to watch the trees and the sun, which was always shining yet not overpowering, between the gaps in the trees. It was the prettiest sight I’d seen. Every time, I’d lean my head against the window to watch the trees pass by for the long hours we were in the car.

Those steady, beautiful, blinding glimpses of light behind the trees are as precious to me as the resources they give off. Just like a breath of fresh air, I lovingly appreciate the flashes through the trees, the moment of peace, and carry it with me in my everyday moments.

Trees serve within a variety of ways all over the world. The resources produced by trees—many physical products like apples and oranges, as well as intangible oxygen—are extremely invaluable. As long as there are trees in the world, the world is plentiful and will remain nourished as each new generation takes care of the natural world.

I marvel at the way trees in their natural state of being give so much for us to live and grow without wanting in return, just existing as providers and keeping us safe, just absorbing all our pollution and toxic chemicals. But sometimes I wonder if we do enough to help them in return. Similar to the lives of humans, trees exist every single day, slowly changing more or less, as life goes on. Yet, the trees will be destroyed to become materials for us to use. I wonder if it is enough to watch the trees grow, just to observe and admire. The more I think about it, the less I think so; the need to plant, to renew, lies beneath, to sustain the earth so that new trees can come to be marveled.

Thankfully, there seems to be a glimmer of hope for my beloved trees. People pay attention to the fire which harms,

or at worst destroys them, ready to lend a helping hand to save them, whatever is left, like a friend helping a friend, in need. There resides a recognition that our lives depend on one another, us and the trees: that we rely on each other to survive and live better together.

During the lonesome and anxious lockdown because of COVID-19, my window and its view provide solace despite sickness and death around the world, allowing a small, precious moment that encourages beyond the presence of uncertainty. The lively trees outside my room inspire me every time I watch them. Like many others, I experience interactions outside of my home sparingly. It is the most bothersome part of self-isolation. When I look at my neighbors the trees outside, the way some people watch their human neighbors, it is as if a wave of reassurance and contentment has come pouring out of the trees, like a comforting hug, to remind me of the precious nature of being. Trees live upon the earth while humans and

animals perish in different spots around the vast world we share as a collective. Trees are outliving us all. They survive horrible tragedies. They endure in the toughest of environments amongst hurricanes and floods. Trees act as nobly still as we are acting now staying home together, a single person alone, a marvelous forest together, trying to continue.

In my life, I have experienced a disconnect with nature a lot. And it's only lately, through looking to view outside of my window, that I've been able to appreciate the all-knowing wisdom and prolific guidance provided by the trees. It seems to me that the example of trees to exist in rain or shine offers cherished insight. People who survive keep going through hard times. Trees each day grow and bloom, not caring about the environment. They stay strong, waiting for the sun to come around to them. Like the enduring, noble trees, my life waits for the storm to pass, even as it may last for a while.