



fieldwork

summer

Summer is in full swing at our place. The late spring kept us from planting as soon as we would have liked, but now we have Swiss chard, black beauty squash, basil, and a whole crop of tomatoes about to come ripe.

We've also been doing some picking: out on Sauvie Island and closer to home. We've picked blueberries and raspberries. And right here in our front yard we have strawberries and blackberries. There is nothing better than waking up, going outside in pajamas, feeling the still-wet grass on your feet, and gathering a bowl full of berries for breakfast. I know this is a travesty, but I almost don't want to eat them. I want to flash freeze them on cookie sheets and pour them into bags to line up in the freezer. I want to hold on to these tokens of summer to enjoy them on some dark night baked in a warm crisp or on a tired winter morning whirred in a smoothie.

And what about you? How has your

summer been? Has it gone too fast? Does one ever lament the passing of winter? I didn't walk in the light of the cold moon enough; I didn't make enough pots of stew and loaves of bread! But summer seems to move so fast. In these parts, the cool rainy spring felt like more of the same, long winter. And now already it's time to buy supplies for the beginning of school. (By the by, late summer is a great time to stock the supply cabinet whether or not you have young scholars in the house. Notebooks, fresh pots of glue, new scissors—all that potential! And all at the best prices of the year!)



This issue, filled mostly with short book reviews, is organized loosely around the theme of music. I hope you enjoy it. But more I hope you find something here

that inspires you to try your own hand at making music. Whistle while you work. Sing your loved one to sleep. Clear a space in your life for music.

Sing It Yourself

Music can be the ultimate do it yourself project. Though instruments and formal lessons can be expensive, you can always start small and cheap. Maybe there's a songbook sitting quietly forgotten on the shelf. And even beginners can produce lovely tones on a recorder or harmonica.

William Stafford says that if you get stuck in your writing, lower your standards and keep going. I think it's the same with music. We think it has to be perfect. We stop before we ever really get going because we hit a wrong note or sing a little out of tune.



One way around our own self-consciousness is to play and sing with children. Their standards are usually already lower than ours. They are concerned with making a joyful noise, not impressing anyone with their skills!

Two books that have helped me re-visit music, even though I'm not a musician, are John Holt's *Never Too Late* and *The Listening Book* by W.A. Mathieu. Holt describes learning to play the cello as an adult; it's a nice description of any kind of learning. Mathieu's book is more hands-on. He'll have you composing short passages of real music. Joy indeed!

Children and adults, who meet classical music for the first time, should be able to meet it as a great feast of sound to be enjoyed for its own sake...let astonishment and delight come first; curiosity, questions, thought and understanding, will come later.

--John Holt in *Never Too Late*

Celebrating the Turning Year



The Feast of Michaelmas falls on September 29. This harvest celebration commemorates the day Michael the Archangel drove the devil out of heaven...and into a patch of blackberry thistles! So enjoy a bit of late summer's bounty.

- Drink blackberry tea with peanut butter toast
- Stir up a pot of blackberry preserves
- Make cream scones to go with the jam!

Start with the Children

The next time you need just a bit of biographical information on someone, resist the urge to look them up on Wikipedia! Instead, head to the children's library and see what you can find. Biographies written for children often provide just the right amount of information, and the books are full of illustrations. What a boon! Here are a few to get you started, but please don't feel limited by my taste. There really is something for everyone at the library.

- *Emily Dickinson's Letters to the World* by Jeanette Winter. This small book provides an introduction to Dickinson's life and then a whole smattering of poems. The bold illustrations show Emily in striking poses. Our girl loves to imitate them.
- *Through Georgia's Eyes* by Rachel Rodriguez and Julie Paschkis. I picked up this book because I couldn't remember where Georgia O'Keeffe was born. New York? New Mexico? No, she was born in Wisconsin! Be warned: the text of this book leaves something to be desired, but the cut paper collage evokes something of Georgia's great plains of color.
- *John Muir: America's First Environmentalist* by Kathryn Lasky and Stan Fellows. The glory of this book lies in its reliance on Muir's own journals. You get to hear his voice telling his story. The illustrations are like wonderful field notes with detailed finished paintings next to quickly sketched observations. I loved learning about John's inventions and his cabin that hung above the creek.
- *The Boy Who Drew Birds: the Story of John James Audubon* by Jacqueline Davies and Melissa Sweet. This book is an excellent example of the scientific method in action. It tells the story of how young Audubon began to uncover the mystery of the migration of the phoebe. And even today there are wide gaps in knowledge about specific species. What will your child discover?
- *Lucy Maud Montgomery: A Writer's Life* and *Helen Keller: A Determined Life* by Elizabeth MacLeod. These two books combine text and illustrations in innovative ways. This means that the books can grow with your child. Our almost two year old is fascinated with the photographs from these women's lives, and she is satisfied with the information offered in the captions. An older child can read the text and look at the pictures. There are also timelines and suggestions for further reading. So much information in such a fun format!

