

Thoughts from the Garden

October 2014

Last year we planted some native perennials. Plants that are native to this area provide nutrition and shelter to the creatures who live here. They are also beautiful. The goldenrod bloomed in the heat of the summer this year. Its tiny yellow flowers are still all bunched up, yet flawlessly spaced, at the top of the green-leafed stem. From a distance, it looks as though it has a crazy haircut of lemon. Upon closer inspection the perfect shape of every single flower is evident – tiny golden stars gathered together to brighten up the place. Another yellow flower, the golden aster, returned this year too. A late-summer bloomer, this plant has delightfully simple yellow flowers, each one connected to the main stem yet shining cheerfully on top of its own little place. We also planted the familiar black-eyed Susan and Mary Lou's favorite, butterfly milkweed, with its bright orange flowers. It was a joy to watch these plants resurrect in the spring and then bloom when it was time. The butterfly milkweed's tiny pumpkin-colored flowers ended weeks ago and are now replaced by long sickle-shaped seedpods. The pods are beginning to reveal their hidden treasures - seeds hanging onto white puffs ready to begin their journey to some welcoming soil when the breeze comes along. I find myself delighting in these small and courageous acts of life. Would I trust the world enough to let myself be carried by the wind on the wings of a white poof?



My favorite plant of last year was the blue aster. Like the golden aster, it had a small and simple flower the color of the sky tinged purple in the early morning. I didn't notice it growing in the spring, but one day Mary Lou pointed out a plant growing in its place and suggested that it might be the blue aster. Excited by this prospect, I watched it grow everyday. It became quite tall – almost as tall as me. My expectations dwindled as I watched because it seemed to be so different from the year before, and yet I kept watching and hoping. Even if it was not the blue aster, its buds were shaping up and something was sure to bloom. One evening I inspected the buds closely and what I discovered was the faint beginning of the hue of blue. The blue aster it was! Over the next days and weeks, the hundreds of small buds opened into charming flowers which attracted insects of every sort. The bumblebees seemed to rest on the flowers in the coolness of the early morning before the honeybees and native bees would begin to buzz from flower to flower collecting pollen. The abundance of flowers was impossible to take in during one look. I found myself wishing that I could soak in the beauty through my skin somehow but then I would content myself by simply gazing for a short while.



I went for a walk one day and discovered golden aster, blue aster, and goldenrod growing gloriously along Commack road. I wondered how they got there and how I never noticed them before. I was also tickled to see a blue aster coming up in another garden patch where we hadn't planted it previously. It made me think of those milkweed seeds floating away. Where have I landed when I allowed the breath of God to blow through my life? Have I discovered good soil in these

unexpected places? Can I appreciate what grows, even when it is not the blue aster?

May I, too, trust the world enough to allow myself to be carried on the wings of a white poof.