

What to Say of Garlic Mustard?

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Julia Hayes

Contents

April 8, 2006	1
Purple Violets	2
Ground Ivy	3
Flowering Locust	4
Garlic Mustard	5
<i>Rhus radicans</i>	6
August 28, 2007	7
On Nettles	8
Dame's Rocket	9
On Common Milkweed, Brazen Birds and Beautiful Butterflies	10
Window Watch in Early March	11
February's Promise, 2009	12
Through the Conifers	13
Half a Cheer for Garlic Mustard	14
Hop Vines	15
Early Autumn, 2009; a Tribute	16
November 9, 2009	17

April 8, 2006

Sleet and scilla on the lawn
This gray day in April

Scilla says that spring is here
Winter told to get in gear.

Winter,

Stubborn,

Stays.

Purple Violets

Thrusting out grass come purple violets
Hardly shy
Despite romantic fantasy

Off with their invasive heads
Warn purists.

...Though perhaps not now....

Just for today I'll fantasize too

Pretending natural harmony
In purple violets' wanton beauty.

Ground Ivy

Gill over-the-ground
Romps by the bound
In blue-eyed glee
At being free
To wander

Seducer of the space.

Flowering Locust

Panicles of white May bloom
Graceful in the breeze
Charm motorists
As planned by our DOT.

Invasive
Purists say

They say, says Locust
Defiant
On its chainsaw-busting wood
I've claimed this turf
And I am here to stay.

Garlic Mustard

What to say of garlic mustard?

Edible?

They say, not I

Too bland to call it weed

As weeds at least have grace of personality.

Tough and tasteless

There it skulks in semi-sun

Banisher of shy green

Malignancy of lawn and wooded path.

Rhus radicans

Poison ivy has its place
If only it would stay there,
Climbing field-side hedgerow trees
It shelters birds and feeds them berries.

Climbing house-side terrace walls
Poison ivy harries.

August 28, 2007

Avocados rising in the compost
Four stems headed for Mexican sun,

But wholly blasé
On finding New England.

On Nettles

I like stinging nettles
For what it's worth;
Likely the Irish in me,
Hostile while happily giving.
Like nettles.

Are they weeds?
I think not.

Deer finding nettles
Don't munch through to lilies.

Brushed on achy human joints
Nettles startle—
Pain flees.

Host to butterfly larvae,
Warding off chomping herbivores,
Nettles release winged beauties:
Milbert's Tortiseshell
And Red Admiral.

Young nettle tops
(Wear gloves and shoes while gathering.)
Young sorrel if you find it
A squeeze of lemon otherwise
Potato, not too much,
Simmered till done in chicken stock,
Mashed or coarsely sieved,
A soup to confirm the spring.

There is more to ask of a putative weed?
I think not.

Dame's Rocket
Hesperis matronalis

Dame's rocket
Rogue wanderer that it is
Has crept from orchard edge
To garden beds
Where first it flourished
Two hundred years ago.

Chased from houseside by determined sickle,
Having gone out of fashion
As garden plants do,
Rocket fled to orchard.

Banished from orchard by efficient mower
It had meanwhile crept about.

Masquerading as an early phlox
In pink and white and lavender,
Rocket outlasted intolerance.

As have certain of us.

On Common Milkweed, Brazen Birds and Beautiful Butterflies

What's so common about it?
Only the name, in truth

And certainly not the taste—
DON'T try it.
Blue jays having sampled larvae or those larvae's parents
Found feasting
On common milkweed
Pause...
Wiping bills in disgust,
Hardly appropriate conduct for proud beauties

This they know, as do their watching Blue Jay kin
And abandon milkweed to the Monarchs,
Monarch butterflies that is.

Beautiful orange Monarchs
Lay groups of yellow eggs
On undersides of milkweed's
Pointed oval leaves
Where milkweed's toxin
Protects both plant and pollinator.

Not a bad bargain I'd say.

Window Watch in Early March

Three bluejays at the feeders
Three beauties come to feast and preen

(As is the way with beauties)

And stay aloof from riff-raff,
Among whom are the chickadees

Chipper and gregarious
Chickadees are riff-raff,
To bluejays anyway

Maybe then I'm riff-raff too
Loving chickadees as I do.

February's Promise, 2009

Galanthus nivalis

Snowdrops bring hope for end
To this endless winter
Rising, as they do
Already in bud
From still-frozen ground

Disappearing
Briefly
Under new snow
They grow and wait
Quite patiently
To reappear
As snow sublimes.

Indeed,

There is hope after all.

Through the Conifers

Sunset tonight is worth sitting out for
(Missing the *NewsHour* even)
Watching beauty through
Tall conifers

Planted seventy years ago
At least
By the actress who summered
In this house
That seventy years ago
As border between here and there
There being land she had deeded to him

Him?
A cousin the chaste have said
And New Englanders of that time
Did tend to believe in chaste

Questions were later raised
By Mike, from down the street
Who'd come to mow the fields
And found an unfazed actress
Sunning *toute nue* on a flat shed roof
Overlooking
Low conifers.

Half a Cheer For Garlic Mustard

Garlic mustard makes most lists
Of pesty plants

I have small quarrel with that,

Note though, I do not say,
No quarrel at all.

True to name,
Garlic mustard's potent scent
Repels wild deer and ilk
Barring them
From tasty ornamentals.

Thank you garlic mustard,
At least for that.

Hop Vines

Hops don't
Hop, that is
They sinew rather
Edging growing tips
Around whatever leads to light

Stone walls, grass clumps, new forsythia...

And after enough of this
Perhaps a year or two
With a nice backlog of stored energy
Hops make flowers

Hop-version of flowers anyway
Looking much like mini paper pinecones

And cherished for decades
In this house's kitchen
As yeast enhancements
For house-made bread and beer.

Early Autumn, 2009;
A Tribute

Goldenrod

Seaside, roadside, or just across the driveway
Has outdone itself this year
In wonton sunny glory

As if to compensate
For joblessness
And random vicious politics.

This year especially
We are glad of

Goldenrod.

November 9, 2009

A dandelion is blooming,

Enlivening both my lawn and mood

This dim-lit afternoon

The dandelion

And I

Today deny

November's gray.

