

My Mother's Garden

There was a time growing up,
I couldn't picture my mother
Without dirt on her hands.

The day I heard grandpap had died
I ran home from school to find her
Spade in hand, knee deep in the peas.

I couldn't believe it, didn't understand.
Through death, a miscarriage,
My brother's teenage rebellions,
While my world fell apart,
She tended the garden.

It got to the point I blamed the plants.
I pushed away the vegetables
That she had placed before me.

It was the only time, during that time
I saw my mother's eyes well with tears
And hopelessness.
I ate every bite of that broccoli
And never turned it away again.

Still I didn't understand.
When I left home for the first time
It was to a third floor apartment
That faced the street.

I only understood on the day I found out
About my husband's affair.
I went out and attacked the flower beds.
Staring at the devastation I left in my wake
I told my son to get his shoes on
We were going to the nursery.

Confused, he asked
"Do I have a new brother?"
"No," I said,
"I have to get more plants."

Through separation, lawyers and divorce
I tended those seedlings.
I had the best begonias on the block that year.

My friends looked at me askance
When I answered I had my husband to thank.
They offered to find me a therapist.
I told them I already had a good one.
One my mom had recommended in fact.

Where do the strong go
When they need support?
When I need to find wisdom
And my inner voice,
I go to my garden.

I tell the bad things to the weeds.
In a secret hope it will stunt their growth.
I save the good news for the vegetables.
Hoping my dreams will nourish my children.

At the end of the day,
I have a pile of weeds at my feet
Waiting to be mulched.
And looking back I see
Only good things growing.