

An Organic Kinship Botanical Garden for Humanity

Conservation of Biodiversity at a time of ecocrisis.

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It doesn't take much to see that we, you and I, all of us, are destroying the natural world with our activities.

The red eyed fruit fly has a wild type. It's the Oregon red eyed fruitfly because one of the original scientific, genetical sources of these tiny flies that eat yeasts growing on decaying fruit was the Pacific Northwest of North America. In 1905, in a laboratory in Columbia University someone spotted a white-eyed one and began the genetic study of insects, animals of another but not so different sort from us. Insects and us share many genes. We have a lot in common. From the wild type fruit flies have come millions of variations. Some live twice as long as others. Some live long enough to be called Methusalem. Some have eyes on their wings. Some have multiple sets of wings. All these come from the wild-types.

The biological distribution of different kinds of organisms over and inside the earth has a pre-human wild-type. As habitats continue to be destroyed, as development and inhabitation reduces, eliminates and extincts thousands of species, there is unambiguous need to provide successful habitats for those plants that can be rescued from destruction. By connecting conservation to the structure of diversity, we can overlap these directions with the ecological cross-section of our multi-site organic botanical garden organized as pathways thru the tree of life. Kinship extends from species to their collections as genera and the collections of genera

that make families. Relationships among families is better understood and continues to make increasing sense. And within species and their interfertile close kin another direction in kinship gardening emerges; namely, the past and current use-ness derived plants; plants selected by humanity for food, fiber, flowers, herbs, medicine, ecology, sustainability, abundance and health.

We propose a conservation and wild-type preservation project in proportion to the scale of the eco-crisis that looms for all of us. Distribution of kinship collections is eco-specific. The right plants for the right places; the right plants from the right places. How much of world flora can be accommodated in 10 (25) locations comprising 1000 (10,000, 100,000) acres?

The direction is compelling work for many people, an opportunity to serve a vision and dream of conservation, a garden for humanity, using the talents, lives and devotion of plant people committed to peace and well being for all.

Conservation by propagation on lands in our hands becomes an essential, common activity. It requires recognizing which species are endemic, rare and representative of unusual families and locally adapted kinds. This requires us to become competent with technical botany, diverse horticultural skills, field exploring looking for relictual populations, becoming able propagators of every kind we encounter.

Diversity is best conserved in well tended gardens. I might like to think that wild habitats will remain undisturbed but this is unrealistic and unlikely. Instead we can have parts of the earth dedicated to conservation by intent. Some botanical gardens planted a hundred or more years ago contain some of the only living plants of what are now extinct-in-the-wild flora, and these trees are magnificent, the flowers are spectacular, the leaves beyond duplication, and all the creatures that live in and around these plants are pieces of the web of life that as it disappears leaves us all more impoverished.

What is common in one place is rare in another. Many rares are already gone and we accept non-living plastic stereotypes in

their place. As we are increasingly isolated from the natural world of wild-types our connection to reality fades.

So we dedicate and devote ourselves to gardens that optimize diversity, that have room for variety, that extend our horizons as to the marvelous plants selected by humanity from the wild-types.

Let us work to conserve the wild-types that they may be in their time the progenitors of regrown populations necessary for our human adaptations to the changing eco-planetary conditions.