

September OPAA column, Olympic Peninsula ArtWalks by Suzan Noyes

“What I did on my summer vacation.”

I'd planned vacation time-out this month, then realized my notice of OPAA's first virtual Art Exhibition would print after the fact. This is a special show, so here I am to say so. It deserves another look from all of us, more sharing with friends and family prior to closing day of Sept. 30th.

OPAA members miss our monthly meetings and personal participation in our annual art show. Visit once more and enjoy your art in this amazing format pioneered by Debbie Young and Allyne Lawson with much work and effort. Share the show link with viewers outside our group, it's amazing how many this reaches with our U.S. and global connections. I appreciate Anne's comments, the beautiful graphic of falling leaves as well. All various sections are easily maneuvered. Many thanks to Debbie and Allyne and the support team at OPAA for this new option online during a difficult year.

It's been an odd summer on the Olympic Peninsula - too short. I blink at pumpkins outside Safeway and some early changing foliage. Zucchini Fatigue hit a week ago (*squash*, another gift that keeps on giving).

Rampaging nasturtiums – resplendent mounds of yellow and orange flowers. Blossoms billow and grow. *A lot*. Flowers go straight to seed, then issue in tri-packs like fat shamrocks. Wrinkled, mousie-sized brains, furrowed with the necessity of continuing their species. Like that 'fifty's Sci-Fi film of giant pods, nasturtiums are inherently brainy enough to propagate and take over the world. They flourish in Mediterranean climates under high temps and little precipitation, climbing, spreading.

Evidently, this includes my backyard. I stupidly Googled how to save and dry seeds. Like Nasties need humans to reproduce?

“Geddowdaheah – we goddit covered.”

Those pretty, peppery flowers can be eaten in salads (no chemical spray please). I also found a recipe for nasturtium “capers”. I *like* capers, little pickled buds in a jar from Trader Joe's - tasty in prima vera appetizers, lemon chicken. Two pints didn't sound like much.

Mercy, I have enough mousie-brains on the vine and the ground to provide capers to the City of Sequim, if necessary.



The recipe involved six cups of salt brine, changed three days in a row. The Nasties get rinsed and ultimately drowned in boiled red wine vinegar with some garlic, an herb or two. Then the jars are left to marinate.

I confess to doubts of the recipe, rose-hip jelly from this book failed miserably. I am no neophyte when it comes to preserving, Momma-in Law taught me well...but the book is so beautiful, a true coffee-table attraction. All those lovely photographs of glowing jam and brandied fruits. Would the author lie?

I am a small gardener, lurking behind deck pots of variegated grasses, and small pots of veg, etc. In my dry yard I sits and thinks (sometimes I just sits). All my perennials have outgrown their beds and need new and deeper holes to thrive. I once xeriscaped in Oregon's High Desert - no more eternal drip lines. Now I must hand-water the six-foot plants screaming in their pots. Delphiniums. Sweet Peas. Globe Thistle. Having grown them, I am responsible.

I've a twenty-foot-long-wild bed where Flanders poppies announce spring and tall, local grasses wave outside my bedroom window. Hand-seeded Queen Anne's Lace hits five feet by August, a *weed* and member of the carrot family – prototype of another Sci Fi film, “*The Thing*”. (I don't plan these connections, People, but I'll take one outer space carrot in lieu of what I see in the daily news right now.) Crazy to be working on flower beds as much of the U.S. burns. Crazy to be digging wearing a mask because of smoke. As I write, many areas of the pacific coastal states are burning. A new seasonal norm? I wish safety for our families and friends and stamina to deal with the fires and hurricanes adding to the upset of 2020. There is hope.

Like all artists, I pursue projects. *Growth* and *art*. All growth is change of a sort, repetition is by choice. Artists create. It's our job. Why do we choose the subjects and mediums we do? Seeds get planted early in our lives. Since life is my canvas and I spy color and form in what I've painted (not always what I had in mind), it remains my choice to uproot the ‘seedling’ or watch if it flowers.

One avenue I've approached on my summer vacation is abstract art, taking some lessons with a painter whose work I admire.

How difficult it is for me to simply paint with little reference or concept. Attack a canvas with color? (*Hey, repetition must be good. Nasturtium Brains + Water & Dirt = Flowers, remember?*) No - I must learn flexibility in my dotage... Alien Pods and Carrot Things, painting in uncharted territory. I plan to write about this experience and post a sample of something next month. Feedback is nice - my painting group is not “grouping”, due to Covid-19.

Please note that some OPAA groups are indeed meeting in safe manner, online or plein air with support via new Board Member Randy Washburne. His *Still Life Group*, and two previously established groups were added to this project: *Plein Air*, hosted by Alice Crapo and *NOW*, hosted by Shirley Rudolf. See OPAA's newsletter for details and join in or try hosting a new group.

Post Mortem: I opened one jar of pickled nasturtium capers and Gentle Readers, it was abysmal. Sad contents bit the dust in our back forty. I relax knowing they cannot sprout. That beautiful canning book's pages are doomed to line my pantry shelves. Said author was out for looks, not content. No excuse, a printed recipe must indeed be edible, and fine art must deliver the goods, so saith Ms. Manners.



Members' Art Show and Sale Fundraiser (Online)
September 1 - September 30
Olympic Peninsula Art Association - <http://opaashow.org>
Browse and purchase artwork at your convenience!