

Write Your Life

A micro memoir writing project

Write about learning to care for something and how it affects the rhythms of daily life.

Save Me

I watered the fuchsia outside our kitchen this morning. It's been there three weeks.

When we hung it, the plant was loaded with bright red blossoms, tight little crimson balls winking open, inviting hummingbirds. I wanted the plant for the color. I also wanted it for the hummingbirds. So far we've had only one, and all the red blossoms have opened wide, then dried, then dropped.

A week ago Tizi said, "It's dying."

I said I didn't think it was.

"You have to water it every day," she said.

When I water it, I tend to go easy. I don't want to drown it. Plus, I remind her we've had a lot of rain.

"It's not the same," she says. And I suppose she's right.

This week the hard heat is landing on us. France is baking. Spain, too. There have been hundreds of heat-related deaths.

It's a nice walk to the fuchsia plant. I grab the kitchen pitcher, half full of water, go out the back door and around the side of the house. The grass is cool and damp on my feet. I checked up on fuchsia plants. They do best in damp soil and, to that end, should be watered once a day; in very hot weather, even twice a day. I empty the pitcher. The plant is loaded with new buds, mini buds, future buds.

A couple summers ago we visited my cousin and his wife in northern Michigan. For two days they fed us well, and we spent long afternoons on their back porch, chatting and watching their hummingbirds. Waves of them winging up to one of their three dedicated feeders and taking sips of sugar water. A gallon a day, they said.

I have never been much of a gardener. My plantsmanship is lacking. In college I grew marijuana plants from seeds. It felt vaguely subversive. Before spring break I gave them a lot of water, like packing them a lunch. When I got back they weren't dead, but they weren't enjoying themselves. And neither was I.

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I've accepted the fuchsia challenge. It's 90 degrees today. I'll water tonight – the pitcher, the back door, Tizi nodding at me as I pour. I like to think of the fuchsia's quiet joy, the nighttime cooling, the life-relief. If a hummingbird comes along, that will be a bonus. I can't depend on them.