

The garden as life.

Post by “Adrian” of February 21, 2023 at 4:50 PM

The garden as an Epicurean space is a reality and not an image or metaphor. We are centred when we are in contact with the soil and with life. The further we are away from nature the more deracinated we become. We need roots, and when we are deracinated we are uprooted from our natural geographical, social, or cultural environments. We need friendships - human, animal and vegetable. This is why gardens are so special. And our relationships with plants are special, and I have plants that I have had for decades (or have they had me), and one that I have had since I was a medical student and visited a hospital in South London.

I was given a 'true myrtle' or common myrtle that is sacred to Aphrodite for my allotment. It was a present from my sister-in-law and is just about holding its own following the recent frost. Next to the myrtle is a *Ugni molinae*, known as Chilean guava berry, or strawberry myrtle. This shrub is native to Chile and southern Argentina. The local Spanish name is murta, and the Mapuche native American name is Uñiberry. It is in the same botanical family as the guava. Ugni fruit was introduced to Europe in 1844, but has been a staple in indigenous Araucano and Mapuche cuisine for centuries. It was a favourite of Queen Victoria and thrauco. The thrauco is known in Chilean folklore and mythology, and is a small creature, that always carries a stone axe and leans on a twisted walking cane. The thrauco loves climbing trees, and eating ugni berries. The thrauco loves nature., but hates people. The ugni berries are its main source of sustenance, and favourite delicacy. In rural Chile the children are cautioned about going into the ugni bushes to pick berries. The thrauco scares children away from his favourite food, and if he finds a young woman he might get her pregnant (pregnancies outside marriage are often blamed on the thrauco). It's interesting to compare myths from different cultures.

And our schools, universities and hospitals need gardens. Dare I say that our philosophy departments need gardens? The preservation of our green spaces and gardens should become almost an obsession. We need to have animal, plant and human friendships.