

TASSAJARA CALENDAR, HERBAL & BESTIARY – 1969

Frances Thompson and Tim Buckley

(Some trees: Oak—Indians gathered about twenty varieties of edible Acorns around this canyon. Chaparral—Chumise, Sage, Manzanita. Coulter Pines on the ridges, Sycamores along the creek beds. Elegant Madrones, grey bark peeling to pea-green and then to salmon-pink, here and there.)

January — Snow on Chew's ridge closes the road.
Rain every 2-3 days, temperature in the canyon mostly above freezing.

1/19 — Big Rain: 9 days
Creek flooding. Bridge out. Monterey County a "disaster area".
planted daikon.

February — Canyon Wrens sing
lots of Thrushes
Golden Crowned Sparrows
Almond Tree blooms
some lavender Shooting Stars

planting — Snowpeas, Romaine, Butterhead and Leaf Lettuce,
Carrots, Beets and Turnips, Gobo (burdock root).

(Frances— "The peas struggled through the cold & rain
& when it stopped & the heat was upon us they bolted to seed. Somehow the pea harvest escaped us.
We got a few. Gobo is the easiest crop we grow.
No bugs, no troubles, long roots, the devil to pull up. Huge leaves, green and splendid.
Everyone asks 'What is that?'")

2/23 — Daffodils bloom

(We harvest Kale, Turnips, Daikon all winter. The Cabbage came in late, but we have Chard all year 'round.)

March — lots of Shooting Stars
Milkmaids
Nemophila

3/4 — Ground Squirrels sing

3/10 — Plum Tree blooms
very warm

3/19 — Maple flowers out
Larkspur
Wild Hyacinth

planted — Chard, green and red.

Suzuki Roshi: "When it is hot we are hot Buddhas.
When it is cold we are cold Buddhas."

Yoshimura Sensei: "In the West people try to alter their circumstances
to fit their minds. In the East people alter their
minds to fit their circumstances."

cooler

foraging for Miner's Lettuce, Dock, Lambs-quarters.

April - Maple leaves out

4/10 - 34°

Sycamore leaves popping

Lupine

Popcorn Flowers

Fiddleneck (cooked in eggs and soy-sauce, or pickled.)

4/13 - Black Headed Grosbeaks

Owls

Great Horned Owl calls

4/16 - Crickets begin

Maple leaves fully out

lavender Chinese Houses

Wild Lilac

Manzanita blooms

(Snakes, Lizards and Scorpions leave winter nests. Birds
return for a feast of Mosquitoes, all kinds of Flies, Ladybugs
that later come to the swimming pool to swarm and drown, inexplicably.)

May - transplant Tomatoes, Eggplant, Peppers all started in cold-frame.

5/11 - Roshi plants Sweet Potatoes

5/15 - Summer and Winter Squash, Pumpkins, Beans

5/16 - Cucumbers—another plant that likes it here. Harvest all
Summer, eat pickles all Winter.

pick first Lettuce, pull Turnips.

Mid-June - a desert dryness

Scattered on the hills Yucca plants send up
phallic green stalks from the middle of spiked
fortresses, then burst into tall candles of pure
white flowers blazing in the Sun, glowing
under the Full Moon.

7/3 - 106°

(In the Winter there is rarely more than a ten degree difference
between the high for the day and the low; in the Summer there is
rarely less than a forty degree difference.)

Mid-July – A unique few minutes of rain just as kernels of Corn brought from the Hopi village of Hotevilla were planted.

August – plant for Winter—Kale, Chard, Turnips, Rutabagas, Carrots, Daikon

8/15 – Cabbages, Cauliflower, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts planted in flats because their future home is still growing a cover-crop of Barley.

(Some Animals: Grey Foxes, Bobcats, Deer, Wild Boar, Raccoons, Possums, Skunks, Rabbits, Ground Squirrels, Grey Squirrels, Black Squirrels, Gophers pulling tender shoots down into their burrows beneath the vegetable gardens—one making his home inside a huge Banana Squash all Summer—Mice, Rats, Dogs, Cats, Mountain Lions—big pad marks down by the Creek.)

Early Autumn – dig up a few Sweet Potatoes, harvest Winter Squash, Pumpkins, Banana Squash; Hopi Corn—divided in three parts: a share returned to the Hopi in Arizona, a share saved to plant next year, a share to eat.

Mid-Autumn – Big Leaf Maples turn gold on the hillsides. Bright red: Poison Oak and Virginia Creepers. Marigolds and Zinnias, the last of the garden flowers, bloom red and gold near the shop.

The sky is still a radiant blue but the incandescent blue Steller's Jays are quiet at last.

The Honey Bees stay at home, the hives insulated with straw and tarpaper against the coming cold, and the Carpenter Bees are silent, burrowed deep in cabin timbers.

The Creek flows a little faster.

Thanksgiving – Vegetables, Indian Corn pudding and Acorn bread for dinner.

ABOUT THE GARDENS AT TASSAJARA

Frances Thompson

We have one field about 100' x 50', called "the Upper Garden", made over the ruins of the old hotel & out in the sun all year. Apt to dig up old bed-springs & odd junk out of it. Good winter & early spring place.

In a winter's labor last year a sloping field was made into 4 level terraces, each about 35' x 40'. This gets shady when the low sun goes down behind the mountain in winter. This spring we made 2 new, narrower terraces on the hillside above this "Lower Garden". It's sunnier there, and good for grapes, which like it & grow & produce well. Above *that* are fruit trees, each with its own small terrace—plum & pear go in this spring. Then the steep rocks begin and wild takes over & we let it.

We try to rotate crops & not grow the same thing twice on the same land. Each season we leave about half the land fallow, growing barley and vetch as cover crops on it. When planting time nears we spread chicken manure over the grass & turn it all under. Add some bone meal, some phosphorus, and as much compost as we can. Plant a month later. Five years of this might give us some good garden soil. A nursery man in Monterey said, when we began 3 years ago, "You can't grow a garden up there. The winter rains come through that valley & wash out all the good soil & the creek takes it down to Salinas and *that's* where you grow vegetables." The creek outside my window runs brown this rainy February day. He's right. But we're trying anyway. We've had fresh vegetables from the garden every day this year.

Most of the labor and thought and effort go into improving the soil. After planting it's easier, especially in summer when we have ladybugs to help us against the destructive insects. I understand one thing now: it doesn't matter what you do—mulch, or cultivate, or pinch back, or allow to grow out—as long as you're *there*, out among the plants, walking about, everyday, with Taking-Care Mind, with Mind of Growth, Unfolding and Fruition, with Gentle Mind. Roshi says "Book is no good. Love the plants and they will grow for you." Neglect them and they languish, no matter how good the soil. This is so. These are domestic plants, used to the hand of man for ages. They are dependent upon us.

When the new seeds go in in spring I can hear all their tiny voices singing together in the night about their new beginning life. When I pull a turnip I can feel the resistance of each rootlet as the turnip gives up its life to me. When I stick a shovel in the earth there is anguish; the earth feels like soft belly-flesh receiving the cut. Do not think eating vegetables is less bloody than eating cows. It's silvery, quiet blood. We mangle the earth, yet she gives all she can to us. Should we leave her to her own Way and graze the acorns and wild plants as other creatures do? (All beings are sentient but some are more sentient than others—the degree of sentientness being measured by the amount of mess and noise made at the moment of death. . . .)