

EARTH CARE & SPIRITUALITY MONTHLY REFLECTION

August 2022

Forest Friends by Susan Gilpin

Forest friends, you are here today! Hello, hello. I return your greetings.

Hemlocks great and small, you plant your feet in damp places. Your half-inch needles are tiny, yet somehow they create so many carbs you can grow into the canopy. Your cones, too, are tiny, and they hang off the end of your branches like raindrops.

Lady slippers, you nestle at the feet of hemlocks. Even though July is too late to see your flower pouches, and your two basal leaves are floppy, I thrill to see you. As a child walking to the fairy ring at camp, I spotted you blooming beside the path and felt fortunate. The place was different, but the feeling remains.

Bunchberries, your four white petals make a cross like a dogwood flower, and your berries stay red all winter. My grandmother used to dig one of you up and plant you in a terrarium with mosses. You were the centerpiece on her dining table all winter.

Club mosses, you were in her winter garden as well. Like a tiny Christmas tree, your branches wave gaily. Your amazing family dates back before the dinosaurs!

Indian cucumber, you grow in the shade as well. Your double-decker leaves give you away, one whorl of six at the top, and another halfway down your stalk. As a child I used to dig up your whitish root and munch it. It tasted like a water chestnut. You are safe from me now, I know not to pick you any more.

Z-Z-Z-Z-Z. I hear you, black-throated green warbler, singing in the treetops. You are feeding your nestlings endless insects, you will rest only after they fledge. No instructions or drivers education for them. One day they will stand on the edge of the nest, flap their little wings, and wobble to the nearest branch. You will both be free.

Hermit thrush, thank you for your distant melody. You hide in quiet places, yet your voice carries far. You are a forest treat.

Hemlock forest friends, it is so good to see and touch and hear you today. Farewell. Thank you for taking me into your company. Here is a poem for you.

A mound of mosses

Coats a fallen log, bringing

From dead wood new life.

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