summer zine 2026

Balm:
A Summer Solstice Photovoice Practice

TA

Sparks of life from a 21 day practice to meet and move through the threshold of the Summer Solstice.

June 7 - 28, 2026

An online container for self-exploration and connection.

Photovoice invited us into noticing the world around us.

Centering invited us into our commitments for the season ahead.

10 people who wanted to move into Summer with intention.

Circle

Lenka B
Paula G
Laura O
Cynthia R
Sarah S

Circle

Terri A
Hope H
Lisa H
Kendra W

Libby Smith - Circle Keeper & Practice Guide



lib

Photovoice is a practice of giving our thoughts and feelings a voice through a visual medium.
Photovoice invites us into noticing the world around us.

Photovoice allows us to go a layer deeper, an embodied noticing of our inner world. Photovoice reconnects us to our environment and the natural cycles of our days.

Together we documented and reflected on our lived experience, carrying key questions along our way.

Sometimes the photos are accompanied by words that were shared in the moment, other times we let the photo say it all...





Feeling a bit fatigued and wrung out...but
also like some bits can still hold vibrancy

What qualities or principles do you want to embody in the season ahead?





I spent a bit of time working today. But I also spent some time watching the Susans grow. She'll be open tomorrow, I bet!

HH

To Begin With, the Sweet Grass

Mary Oliver

3.
The witchery of living
is my whole conversation
with you my darlings.
All I can tell you is what I know.
Look, and look again.
This world is not just a little thrill for the eyes.
It's more than bones.
It's more than the delicate wrist with its personal pulse.
It's more than the beating of the single heart.
It's praising.
It's giving until the giving feels like receiving.
You have a life—just imagine that!
You have this day, and maybe another, and maybe still another.





I feel a little fragile and tentative about being around people, but also strong, beautiful, and thriving in our circle of love





TA



trust in ourselves and the trail

PG



Wind chimes catch my heart a bit. Singing when the wind blows.

LH



Love that this practice makes me notice the little details on plants I walk by every day.

LB



Under a gloomy sky, from the dry
cracked earth, we can still bloom.

The Summer Day

Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean —
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down —
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?



How can we soothe ourselves under the intensity of the summer sun?





Early morning practice porch



I'm still thinking more about a balm versus respite from the intensity, which feels different....


TA


KW


I want more slow
living and eating
this summer.
CR


Things I
wholeheartedly said
YES to today...
SS



I am glad for this practice, to look into my life
with inquisitive eyes these next weeks.

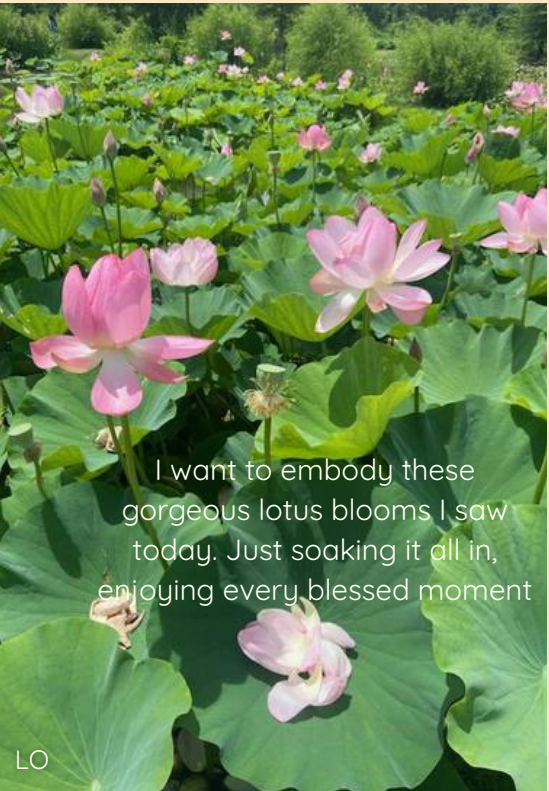

HH



Life feels very intense and busy these days. So grateful this practice encouraged me to take a walk and gather some flowers for my altar to celebrate the solstice!


my cacti bloomed last night right as the solstice was happening!
KW


I want to be adaptable and thrive no matter the external conditions
lib

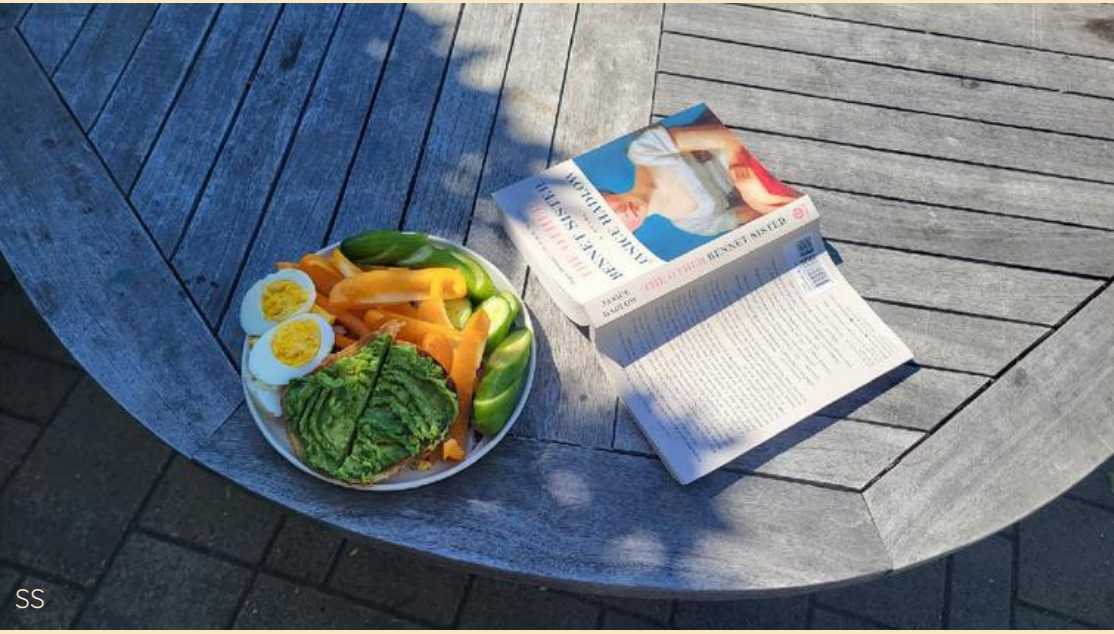

I want to embody these gorgeous lotus blooms I saw today. Just soaking it all in, enjoying every blessed moment
LO


I treasure the little things. To pause and notice the beauty around me, and feel gratitude for the simplest pleasures constitutes a rich and abundant life.
CR

What makes
you feel alive?

Where is your
connection to
your vitality?





SS



I really need to allow myself to linger for a while when I am in moments of bliss and things are transforming around me.

CR

Tiger Lily

James Crews

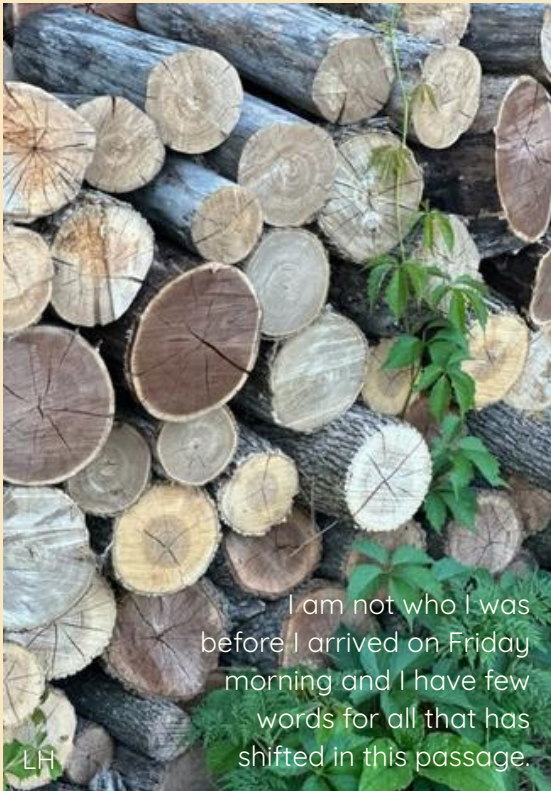
Sometimes the blaze of a tiger lily
is enough to lift you out of misery.
You go and sit on the mown grass
next to it, offer a sip of your water
as encouragement. Stare long enough,
touch its petals like someone testing
priceless cloth, and you will become
the cup that gathers sun, giving gold
and nectar to whatever winged thing
lands near. Feel yourself sprouting
pistil and stamen, your skin smooth
as velvet now as every reluctant part
breaks open for a single day.




Apparently they recently
shed their skin as well.
Sounds like wisdom to me
PG


I want to
embody
branching out
CR


LB


I am not who I was
before I arrived on Friday
morning and I have few
words for all that has
shifted in this passage.
LH



Jogging and lingering by my beautiful neighborhood creek 💚 YES



Being here where my feet are and inviting my mind and heart to join me in the moment.

PG



It never ceases to amaze how a difference of perspective reveals such diversity







Long overdue "yes" of giddy vitality



SS

I've been hungry for collective bread community moments


lib


Why Not Use AI?
"Because my mother did not raise me to let clankers think for me"
Sarah Deel
AI Use in Bio 125
Carleton
ALUMNI

Fellow Pilgrims

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Only when I open the gates of my attention
do I notice the small green shrine in the leaf
as it trembles in the breeze, a sanctuary
so vibrant I can hardly believe I almost
missed it. And then, gates open, I see them
everywhere: the delicate pink shrine
of the wild rose, the quick streak of shrine
of the rooster as he races across the yard,
and there, at the edge of lawn beside the road,
the heart-leafed shrine of a volunteer sunflower,
its stalk upright, its bud still tight, and all around it
the lines where a mower clearly adjusted its course
so the sunflower might continue to grow. How I smile
then, knowing someone else was a pilgrim here first,
how their actions helped me, too, find my way to the holy.




TA


lib



What
makes you
want to say
YES?

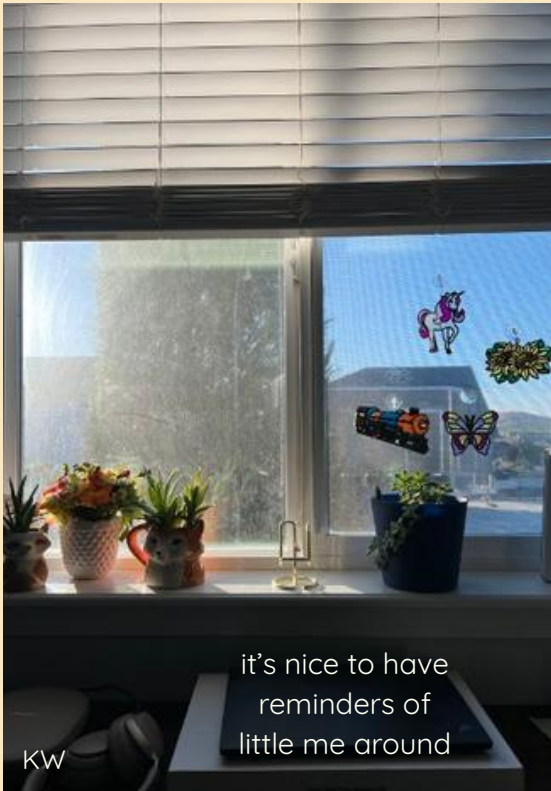


I walked by this railroad so many times, but I never looked at it through my camera like this. A new mindset can change what we see.


I came across this random banana and it made me lough. Wishing for more lightness in the season ahead.
LB

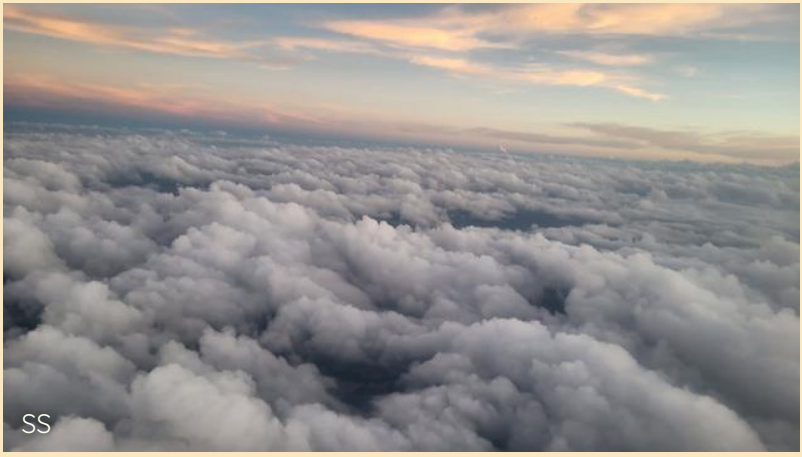

One of my favorite things about this time of year is how everything looks different in the summer light.
CR


Butt is it art?
HH


it's nice to have reminders of little me around
KW



Fascinted by the light and shadows of these simple house plants. Depth, mystery, softness, layers.





During a busy time, having drying
lavender around calms my system
and feels like a gift to my future self

On the Longest Day of the Year

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

There is comfort in knowing
that every year
since the earth was made
there has been
a longest day of the year—
a day when half of all life
wakes to an abundance of light
and then in that moment
of greatness leans again
toward the dark.
There is comfort in knowing
the light comes, the light leaves,
the light comes, the light leaves,
comfort in knowing
all the light that is
reaches toward us,
whether we can see it or not.
It is simply a matter
of staying out of our own way,
and if we can't do that,
well, that is what patience is for.





HH



Playing my guitar and getting lost
outside of time and inside the mystery



A photo can't quite capture the magic of the late evening sun streaming through these trees, the scene felt so alive and fully present for our solstice gathering




SS



Fun playing with light...



I've used the Balm experience to live into my knowing that this summer is about getting grounded, and enjoying what we *have* rather than constantly seeking what's somewhere else



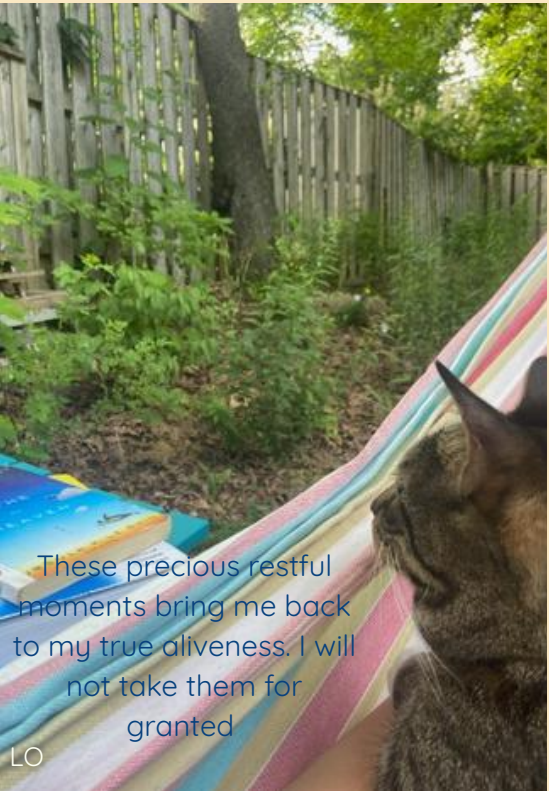


HH



This morning my cat showed me the mixed complexity of how I have been feeling.

PG



These precious restful moments bring me back to my true aliveness. I will not take them for granted

LO



KW



This pace feels good for the season ahead



A Few Days Past the Summer Solstice

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

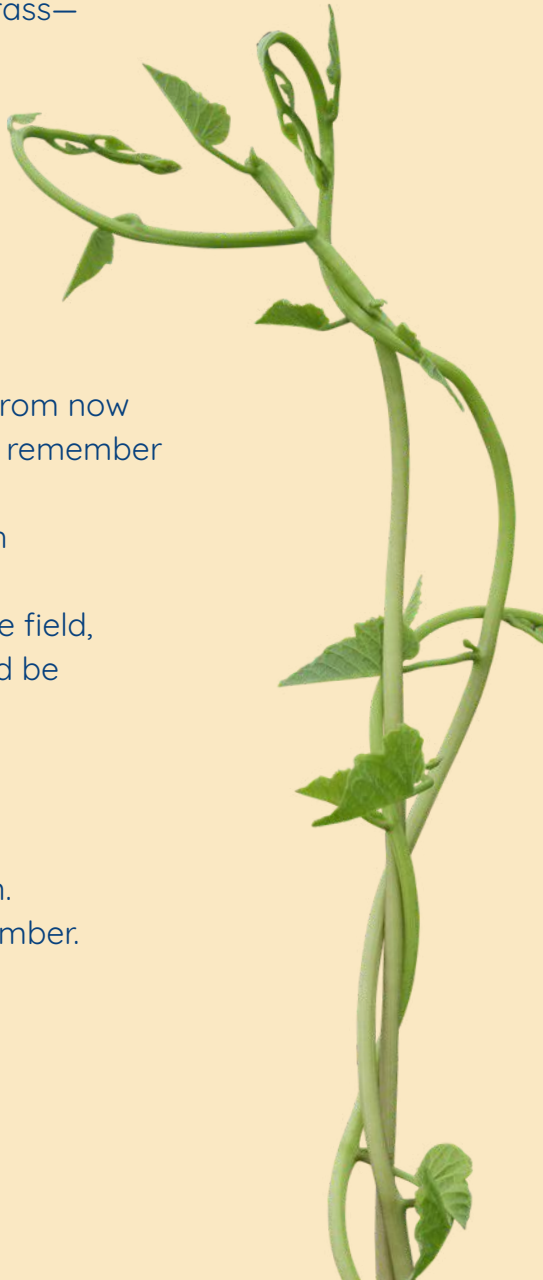
I find myself storing up on light
the way pikas store summer grass—
leaving it out to dry
in front of their rocky homes.

I store light in poems,
in photographs. I stand
bare skinned in the sun
and store it in memories.

There will be a day five months from now
when I will desperately want to remember
how it feels to stand naked
in the field, held by the warmth

of the sun. So I stand naked in the field,
and if I were a pika, there would be
in front of my door a stack
of golden rays and a dozen

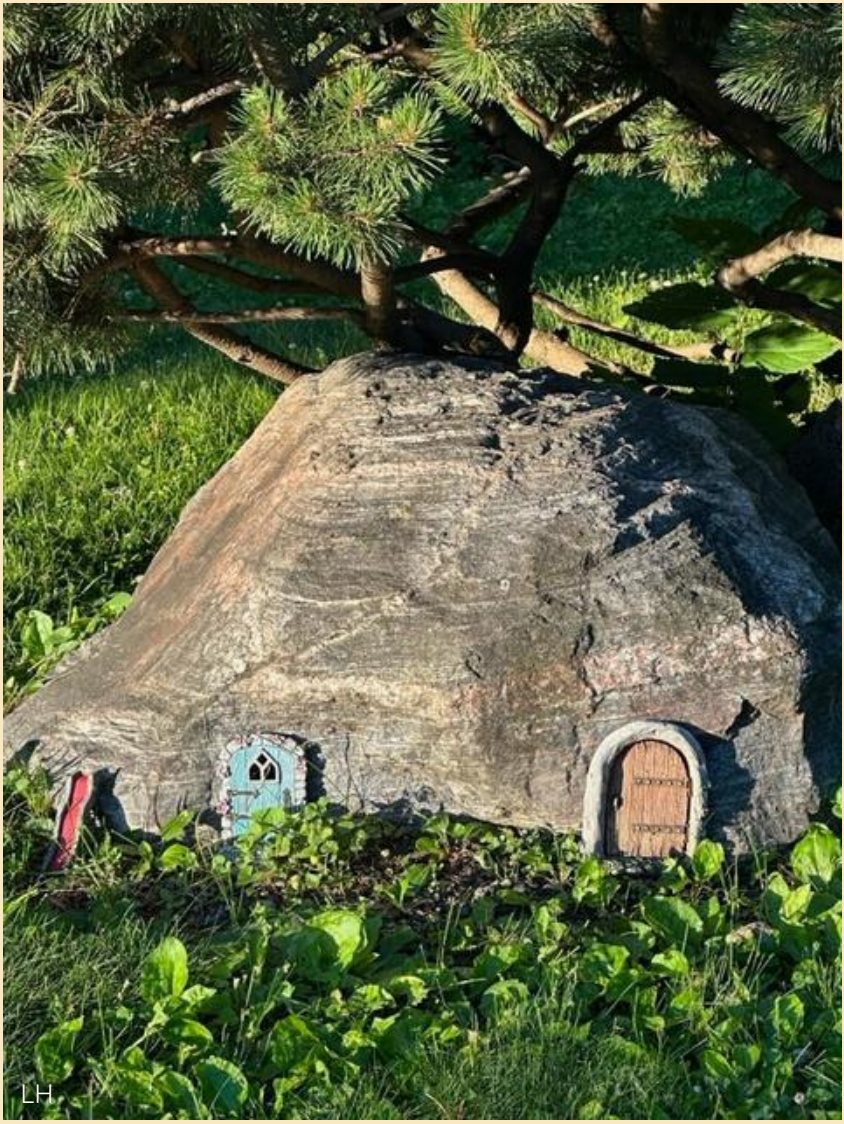
long and sun-drenched days
and the scent of an almost rain.
I know the winter is long. I remember.
I gather more light, more light.





Being with people who care about the living world as much as I do

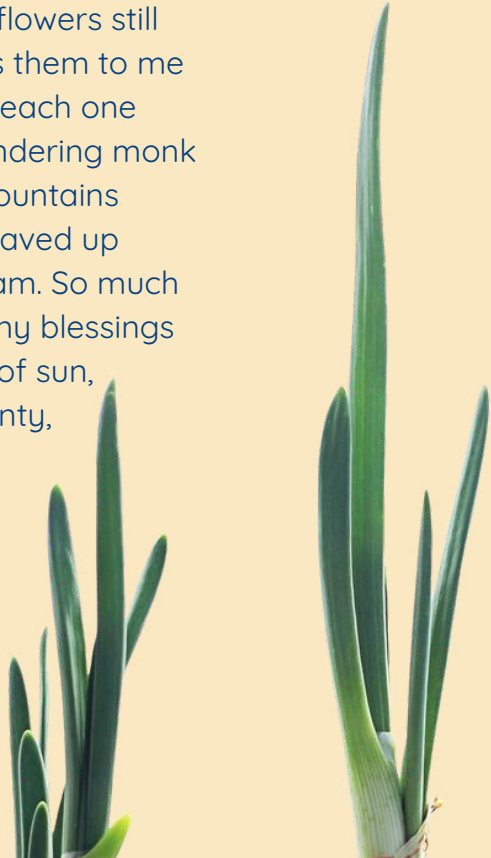



LH

More

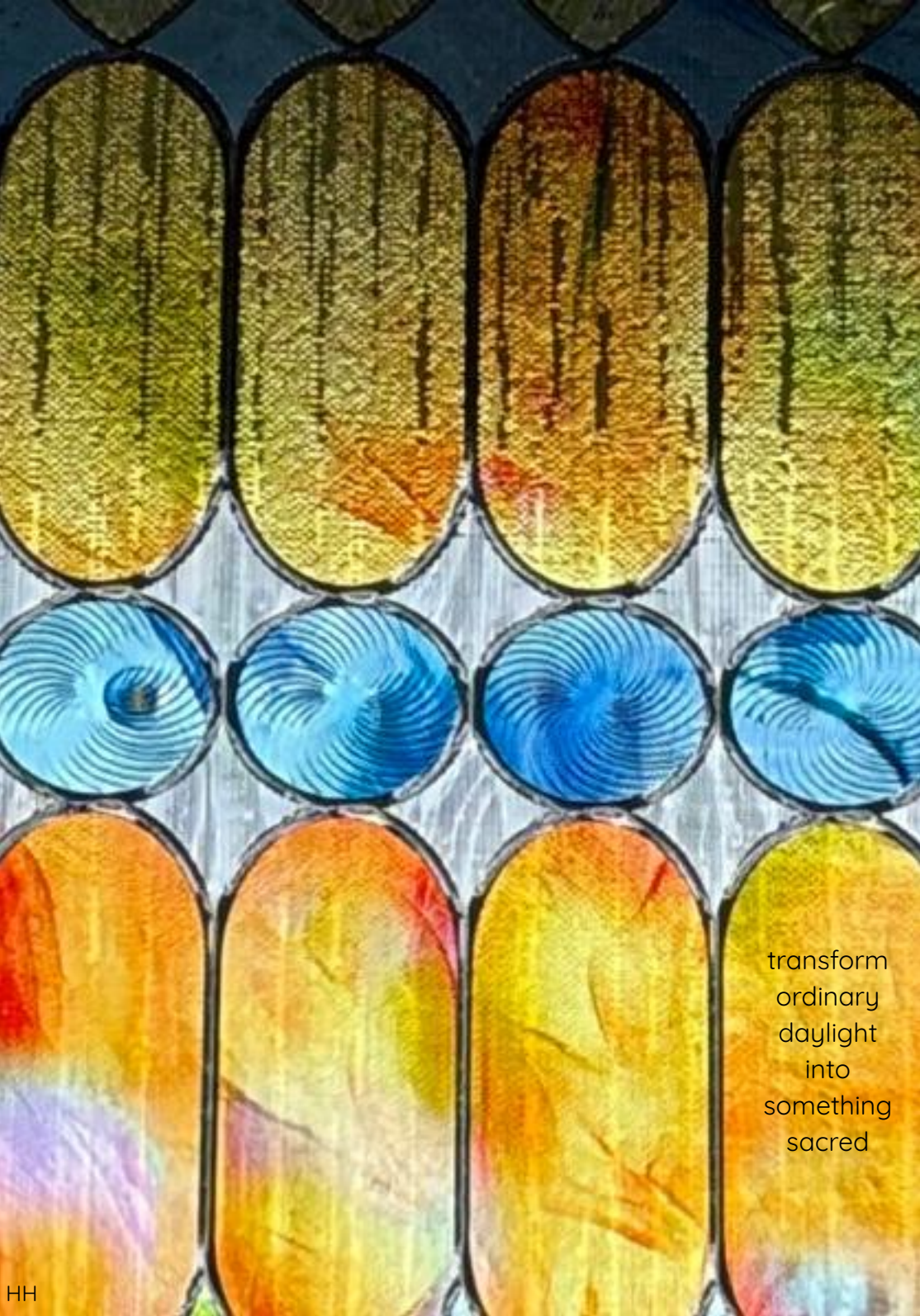
James Crews

I know it's summer when we wade out
into the field and pick these crisp wonders,
tiny cucumbers bleached of their green
as if they've already seen too much
of this dazzling light, and can take no more.
We eat them sprinkled with salt and pepper,
as their name suggests, crunching through
flesh so sweet it's like that of a melon.
I've never seen them for sale in grocery stores,
but they grow here in this soil out of which
my husband could coax almost anything
with his sure touch and sharp attention.
He snaps them from stems with flowers still
shriveled at the ends, then hands them to me
like the gifts they are, and I take each one
into the bowl of my hands, a wandering monk
finally at home among rolling mountains
swaddled in trees, and stones heaved up
as round as eggs from sandy loam. So much
already alive between us, so many blessings
threading our days like the gold of sun,
yet here I stand, holding this bounty,
begging for more.





in the midst of the rapid growth of the season, I can
still savor the delicious flavors, sights, and smells



HH

An Invitation to Keep Practicing

Weave yourself into the magic of the world.

Breathe with a plant, a garden, a forest.

Learn to love what changes as it changes.

Tend the seeds that want to grow.

Find ways to say yes

– even when your heart is breaking.

adapted from the Wild Chorus deck by Abacus Corvus





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