

Reward of the Creek Restorer

by Charles Kennard

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Overflowing with generosity
The creek brings to me
Treasures for my back, my stomach and home.
Blackberries and elderberries
Fatten jars in my pantry.
Winter's chanterelles, sulfur shelf and oysters
Offer themselves to the buttery pan;
Spring follows with
Miner's lettuce, chickweed,
Watercress, lambsquarters,
Nettle soup and salsify root,
Bashful spearscale and pickleweed.

A garden of mints edges the watery path:
Lemon mint, peppermint and spearmint—
Riches indeed for the taste buds.
Fennel, so tenacious at root,
Gives freely of its plumage, petal and seed
To flavor a fish or ease the digestion.
Nature's creekside medicine cabinet
Is bursting with willow bark
Should you twist an ankle;
Bee plant attends a sting,
Blackberry root, a cure for the runs.

Flotsam and jetsam
Hang in the beaten willows or
Rest in a motley crescent:
I have gratefully received
A yellow rain jacket
And a leather belt for my pants,
Lumber, and a bed head for my flowers,
A broom for my floor.
Furtive miscreants have left me
Bolt cutters, women's purses,
A six-pack of Coors,
And any number of empties
To leave at the curb in a basket
Of willow.

Grey willow, yolk willow and sedges
Lend their fibers for baskets,
Purple-flowering hemp and melilotus
Yield fragrant twine.

Steps, posts and bridges I have built from
Unwelcome acacia and eucalyptus,
While storm-broken willows take root
In the banks of other streams.
Creek-borne sand I have carried to my nursery;
Water is the life of us all.