



Kathleen O'Brien Studio

# Art of the Garden

*~ Valentines in July ~*

Sunwise Open Studio Celebration  
virtually

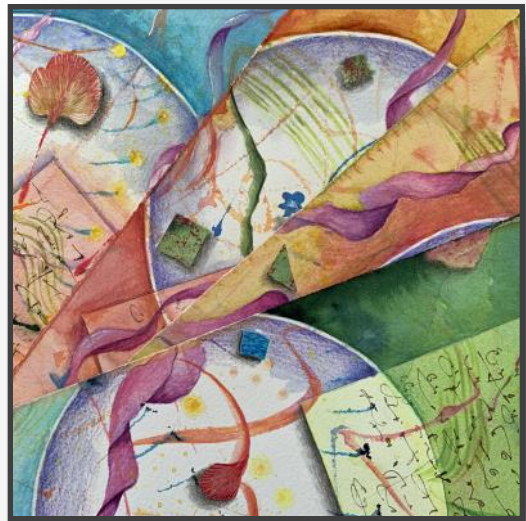
I first began gardening at the Cathedral victory garden in D.C., 1978 when my toddling daughter offered an earth worm to community garden member Phoebe McFeely. She explained that there was a long wait list to join. But since they could count on an earth worm supply from a young helper, she would see what she could do. Three days later, we were IN and from then on, benefited from the long-time gardeners' wisdom and everything we needed was provided; Rock Creek Stables compost, hoses, wheel barrows, tools in a shed.



I'll never forget our lettuce lesson. Arriving one July day to the 10x10' plot we beheld an entire row of red leaf lettuce in a "must harvest now" state. It was so beautiful, each like a 12" grocery store bunch. Our family and friends benefited wildly that day. We had a couple of salads. Now we do successive planting.

This year feels the same with the best garden yet. It took only 42 years to figure out how to feed body and soul from one's hands with divine help – God and weather above, devas and elementals below. Greg's healing hands made the luscious soil mixture and compost that is fundamental to plant growth.

If I had to think of a word to encapsulate the forward momentum towards a continued harvest success, it would be dehydrating. We don't have a deep freeze, the only thing I can tolerate canning is tomatoes (we have lots in 5 varieties) and we need a root cellar solution. As I look around the garden, I notice many herbs to dry as they flower, to make herb salt and pesto. Sweet grass is braided for incense. New this year are Globe Amaranth and Bridal Veil Nigella to make wreathes. The Melissa sachets are sewn and stuffed with the fragrant herb and Clary Sage bundles are decorated.



Much of what I've been painting is inspired from the garden, our main activity for the procession from spring to summer. The *Love Letter* series has many new additions that will be released soon.



I hope you enjoy glimpses of new art, flowers and food in Art of the Garden Tour.







I contained the Sweet Grass in two containers so they wouldn't get mixed up with the myriad other grasses we have. The process of braiding the blades is meditative. So far, there have been three harvests. The mullein, good for the lungs, is now towering over 6'.



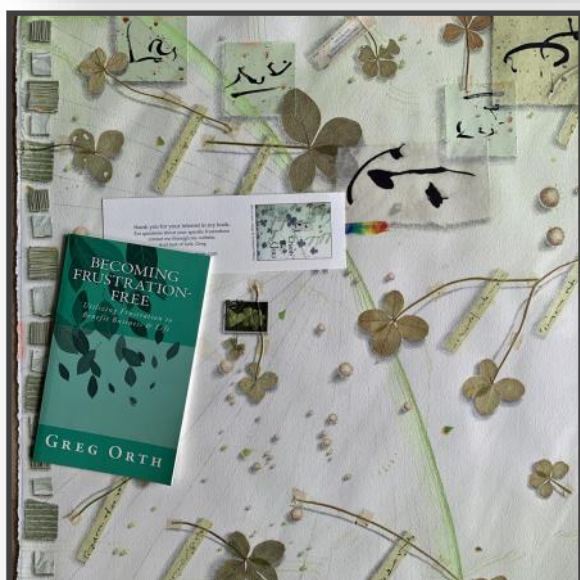


Sage is ready to dry or mash into pesto, grinding up what I call Scarborough Fair herb salt (parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme and pink salt), the first poppy to bloom this year, with last year's painting, and the lovely Clary Sage, picked for it's amazing essential oil filled stems I've wrapped into bundles.



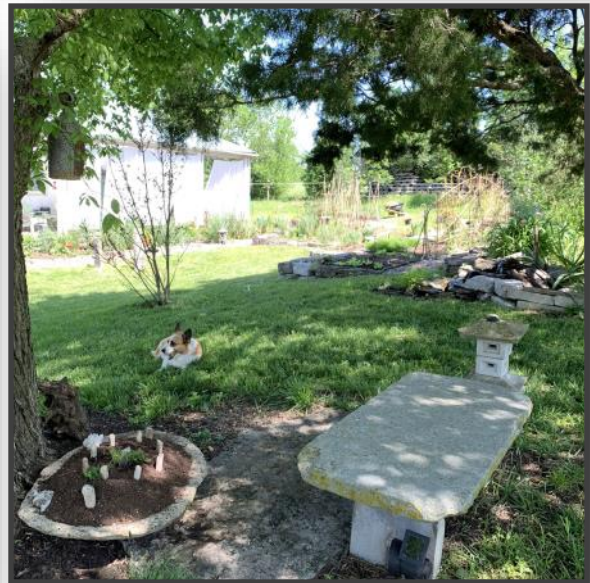
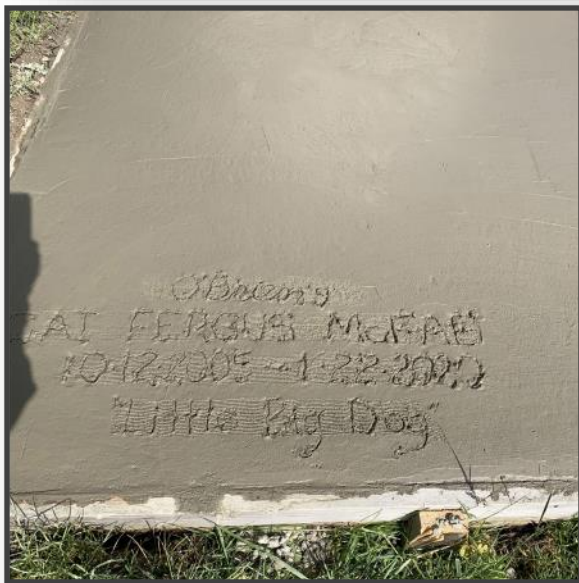
It was exciting to have a few sales through the Artist Support Pledge.





The blues...Bachelor Buttons growing by the hundreds helped soothe me, as I watched my VA carry off my computer to fix when programs failed. I'm so impressed with his shiny blue Tesla that he enjoys driving out here. How luxurious to have fresh peas and fava beans. Greg and I reviewed the principles he wrote about in *Becoming Frustration Free*. In the background, *Best of Luck*, collage 2005.



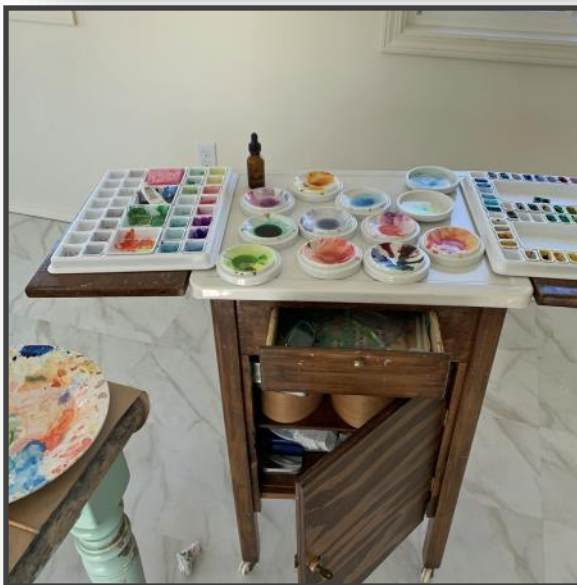


Meanwhile, Greg built the patio that connects the studio annex with the bread oven and Elm tree lounge. It is also darling Cai's resting place. We all miss him.





We made the area ready for a birthday pizza party in the oven. We appreciate the few get togethers with neighbors and friends during this time. It felt like the beauty of the birthday sunset was a sign of happiness to come for the year.



This is the patio area seen from the annex back room.  
 For the summer I've turned it into a drying room. Mounds of  
 Melissa leaves go into the sewn sachets.  
 The faithful taboret has a long history of repurposing. It's first life  
 was as a kitchen/dining table in my school bus. The sides fold down,  
 the top is enamel, and a great little drawer. When I had kids it be-  
 came my oil paint storage. Dad added the plywood door with lock to  
 safeguard them.





More on the *Love Letter* theme, *Dear Azure Tit*, is watercolor, graphite and collage, 15 x 6" on Arches Cover paper and one of four in the series to be released soon.

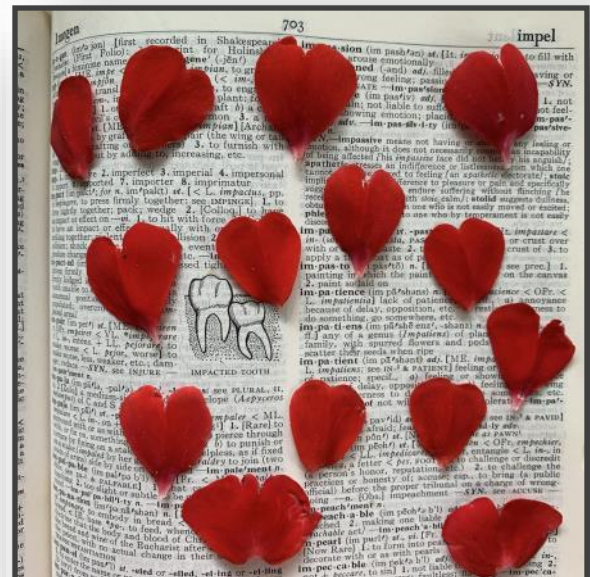




Honestly, sometimes it's hard not to just sit in gratitude for the splendor that is this earth and all it's lovely growing things. And to support that growth. As I write now, the sunflowers are gigantic and the fig trees tower over the zinnias, fruit is starting and morning glories become the east porch shade wall.











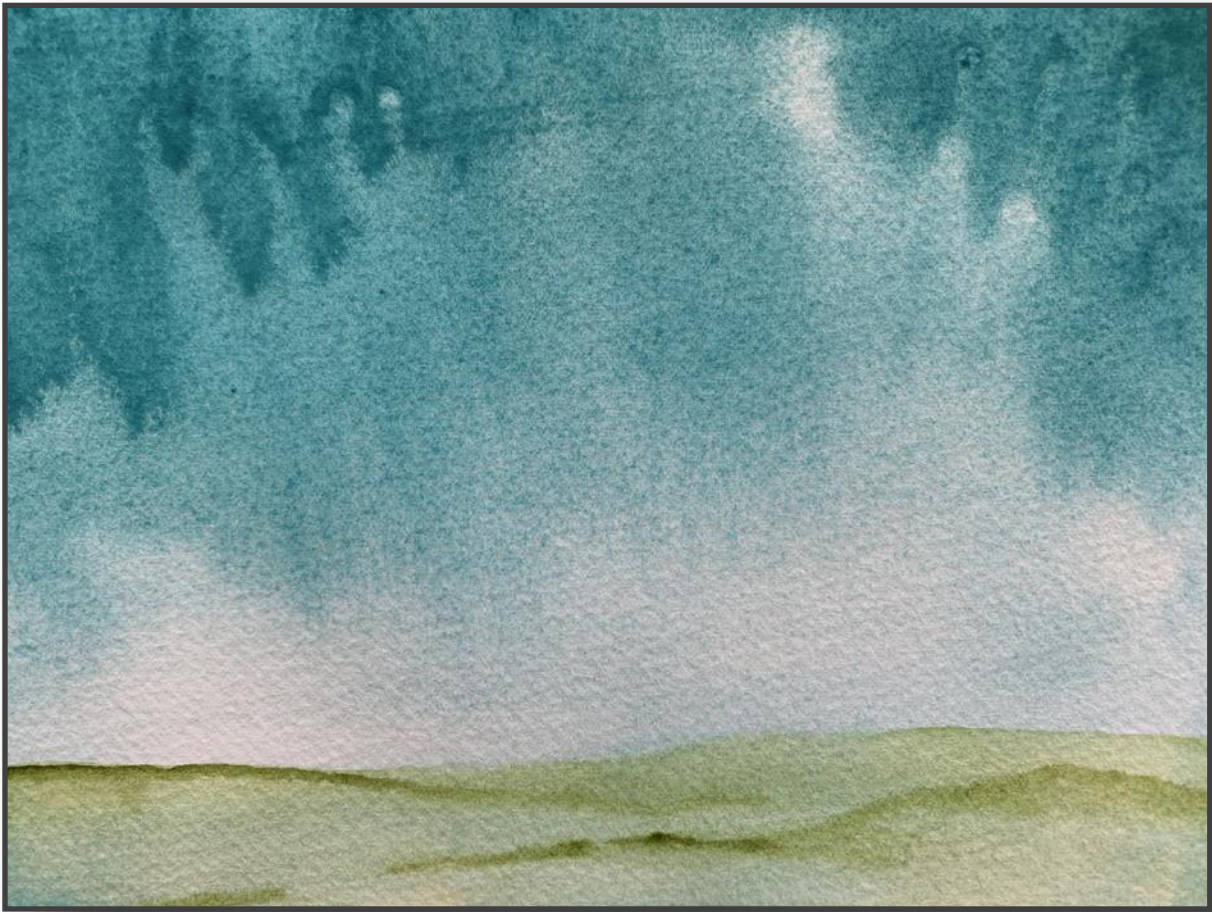
For some reason, I continue making bracelets. Maybe it's because I'm working so much with my hands, and like to feel happy with work. The top row is antique Christmas beads that wrap around three times. Below, woven Christmas beads and turquoise and Peruvian opals.



I've been enamored with the oranges and blue-greens since I started painting over 50 years ago. Recently I've been using Daniel Smith Primatek paints made from gem pigments. Here I'm using Sleeping Beauty Turquoise and Minnesota Pipestone with one of the *Love Letter to You* and a *Madonna Lily* section.

Success with carrots finally! Two bracelets, turquoise and coral.





More *Skyscapes* to come using Daniel Smith Primatek paints  
made from gem pigments.  
Here I'm using Sleeping Beauty Turquoise and Serpentine.



In addition to having lovely food for the table and neighbors, I've been preserving many items to share. Maybe as purchase gifts and items for the next Open Studio, in November. I can't help but save seeds, Bachelor Buttons, Larkspur, Carrots, Lettuce. Mostly it's enjoyable to design the seed packets and tags for print.





Little Bel is now seven. We had a fun birthday party with his twin brother and mom, both live just to the north. The highlight of my day is when they come over for walks and a bit of loving.



More on the *Love Letter* theme, *Love Letter to Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter* each have an Italian stamp of Michelangelo's paintings.



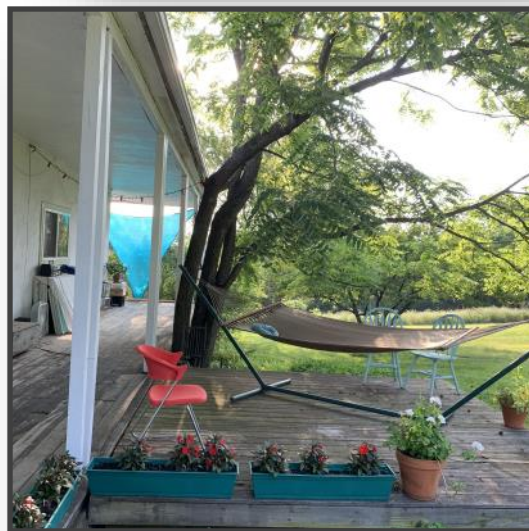


Flowers for salads or cookies. Primary colors for Art of the Garden.

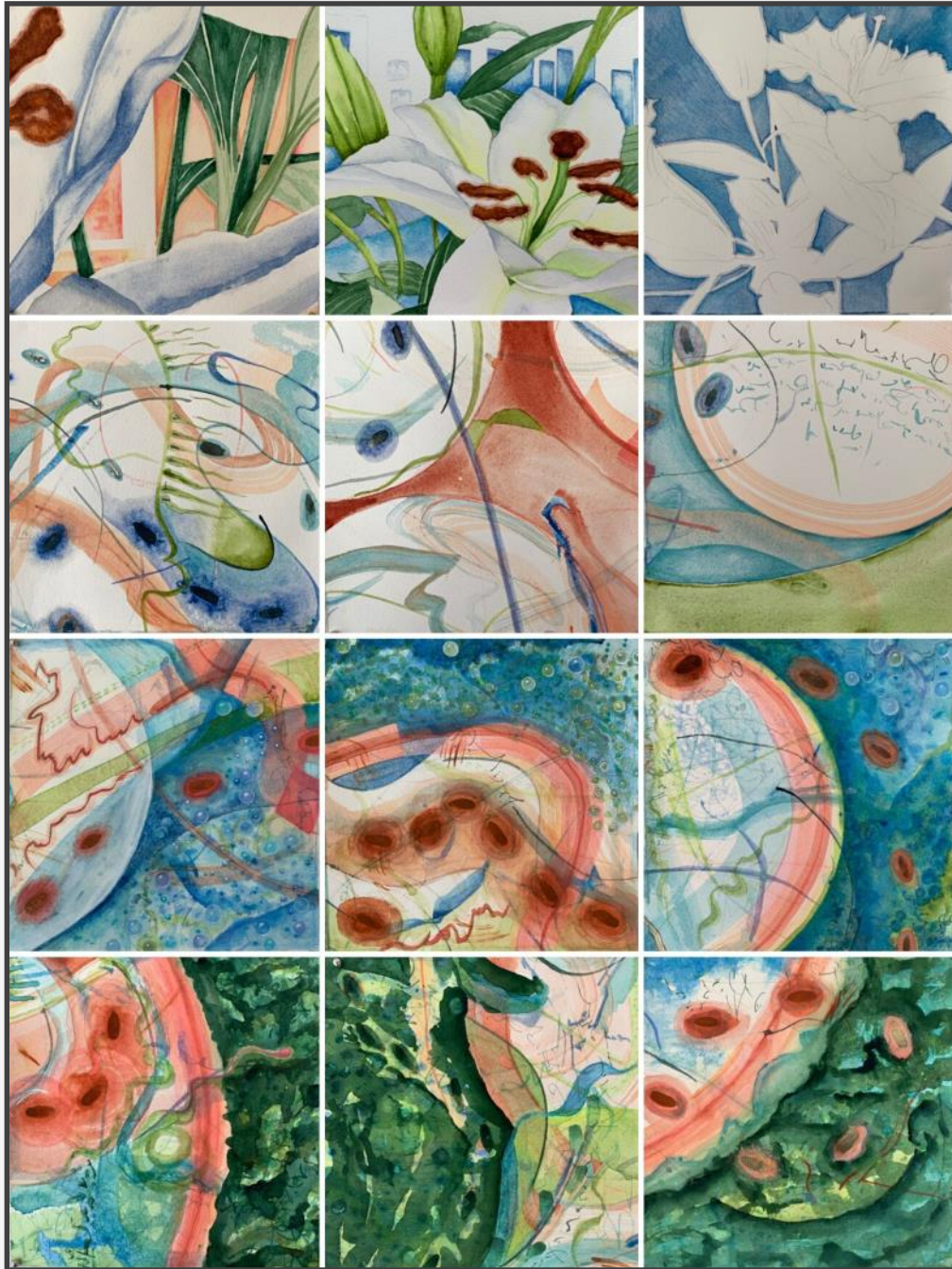


A few paintings for World Watercolor Month ~ July.





I like to rest each day in the hammock, the days are so long, and soon we'll be up to our elbows in canning.



*Madonna Lilies*, a belated Mother's Day blessing. It has many layers. The top glaze is Daniel Smith Primatek paints made from gem Pigments, Lapis Lazuli (historically reserved for painting The Madonna's robe) Sleeping Beauty Turquoise, Serpentine and Minnesota Pipestone. Onward into mid summer!