



# Green Path

James R. Veteto

## Poetry

**Beyond the green wall  
it all opens up.**

### Plantae

**twining vines all around  
herbaceous layer,  
woody shrubs,  
tall behemoth canopy  
subcanopy  
midstory  
the forests  
the deserts,  
mountains and plains.  
The intense greenness permeates  
especially when it rains.**

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Ethnobotany Research & Applications 11:103-107 (2013)

Published: August 5, 2013

[www.ethnobotanyjournal.org/vol11/i1547-3465-11-103.pdf](http://www.ethnobotanyjournal.org/vol11/i1547-3465-11-103.pdf)

Spore plants, no vascular system

—mosses and liverworts—

sphagnum, highly acidic, antibiotic  
bodies of trees, animals, humans  
preserved perfectly in peat bog past

Vascular sporophytes, the ancient;  
club moss, horsetail, and ferns  
standing upright, reaching for sky  
first forests of hundred foot horsetail trees  
Spores dropping to the ground,  
in thallus male and female organs unite

Gymnosperms, naked seeds  
pines, cypress, gingko, sequoia  
crusty old acid-loving needle spreading beings

Angiosperms, the flowering ones,  
seeds tucked tight or loose in nourishing ovary.

Where the real diversity is

—stop and smell the flowers—

Over 250,000 species worldwide.

The Greenman peeks out from the forest,  
his beard rife with foliage  
IS the forest,  
his likeness in trees and other green beings,  
a spirit,  
many spirits,  
when we get calm and connect,  
we are him  
and he us.

And then his brothers and sisters,  
the ents,  
shepherds of trees,  
Tolkien knew them well.  
Tall oaks and strident ash.  
Keen basswood and nutty hickory.  
Nurturing the ecosystems,  
order in chaos.

The trees gave the Celts ogham, a sacred alphabet,  
 each rune corresponding to a green being  
 and they defended the wizard Gwydion  
 in the Cad Goddeu, battle of the trees  
 a poem encapsulating magical system,  
 trees standing for letters  
 corresponding to finger tips on the hands—  
 the origins of casting spells  
 all bequeathed by plantae, the green ones,  
 to ancient practitioners on the green path.

The Cherokee say that in ancient times  
 humans overhunted the animals,  
 upsetting the balance of the natural world.  
 The animals gave us disease in revenge.  
 But the plants felt pity on us,  
 they loved humankind.  
 For every disease they created a cure in their body.  
 An ancient herbal book  
 for us to decipher and cherish.

Old Odin sacrificed himself nine days and nights  
 upon the world tree Yggdrasil  
 when he tasted Oderrerir, the sacred poetic mead,  
 he was given nine magical songs and nine magical runes.  
 The birth of poetry and magic  
 for all those who will listen.

Elixir meads made from flowers, stems, fruits;  
 buds, leaves, and root.  
 Sweet birch, sassafras, paw paw, sweet cicely,  
 wormwood, chicory, black locust, St. John's wort  
 Sambucinnia  
 meads made to mood and season  
 each one its own  
 and the green mind wanders the dimensions.

Food → Medicine → Hallucinogen → Poison  
 a continuum  
 a path  
 every winding, ever flowing

**Psychotropics—now that’s a wild ride there.  
 travelers must be aware.  
 Mother Earth breathes  
 and spirits talk  
 the plants listen and the trees walk.  
 Lady Cannabis Jane  
 an entry way  
 heightens the senses, the perceptions  
 a gateway within  
 to moss-covered oak pathways,  
 a widened lens.  
 The ears hear beautiful music  
 in the wind rustling leaves,  
 blowing branches,  
 clattering bamboo,  
 ringing true.**

**Mescaline will have you talking to spirits straightaway.  
 Mellow oneness pathways open to divine.  
 Grandfather peyote, granddaughter San Pedro  
 best to go on the journey  
 with a trusted group of fellow travelers.  
 Yet, the myriad living beings  
 can help you along solo too.  
 Never alone on the path.  
 There are angels here and demons too.**

**Tread lightly and give thanks  
 on the psychotropic path.**

**The Hopi met Masau, a robed Katchina-God  
 with a simple digging stick and satchel of seeds  
 in ancient times after many years of wandering.  
 They agreed to follow his simple way of life  
 —the birth of agriculture—  
 sowing their ‘three sisters’  
 in desert washes  
 and dancing to the Gods for rain.**

**Agrobiodiversity, the myriad variation  
 of human and spirit hands  
 the generations through  
 creating vegetables and fruits  
 of every shape, color, and size.**

Up in the Katuah mountains of Appalachia still today  
they plant Cherokee White Flour Corn  
with tender October Beans twining up stalks  
and pale orange Roughbark Candyroaster Squash  
drying in the bright Fall sun.

**Plantae**

This green path you lead us down  
these green teachers,  
these divine beings.

You give us shelter, food, medicine, spirituality,  
beauty, poems.

Would that we could grace Mother Earth  
in a similar way  
Would that we could learn from you the way  
to walk the path more greener.

When we open our hearts and minds  
they are waiting there to show us—

**Greenpath.**

for Frank Cook

7-24-11

