

The Flowers and Their Fruits

by Todd Davis

For Wendell Berry

The boy asks his father why
he works so hard to remember
the names of the field's flowers.
This desire for memory requires
the two walk each day into shades
of green that turn over and over
like children tumbling down
the hills of April and May
until they reach the bottom
of September's last days
when the first frost puts
an end to the blooming.
Despite himself, the boy
begins to rehearse the names:
foam flower and phlox, wild
raspberry and wood sorrel,
learns to recognize the tall stalks
of Joe-pye weed and mullein,
the careful lace of yarrow
and wild carrot, and although
he shrugs when he is called
to walk, a bother to leave his play
with the neighbor boy behind,
in time he will come to understand
the only way back to his father's side
is in the memory of the names
of the flowers and their fruits.