

for·syth·i·a  
/fôr'siTHēə/

natural, *adj.*

- Existing or present by nature; inherent in the very constitution of a person or thing; innate; not acquired or assumed.

- Oxford English Dictionary

Bouquet of my childhood; rose<sup>1</sup>, daffodil<sup>2</sup>, mint<sup>3</sup>, apple blossom<sup>4</sup>, common violet<sup>5</sup>, all tied with field bindweed<sup>6</sup>.

One evening in winter  
when nothing has been enough,  
when the days are too short,

the nights too long  
and cheerless, the secret  
and docile buds of the apple

blossoms begin their quick  
ascent to light. Night  
after interminable night

the sugars pucker and swell  
into green slips, green  
silks. And just as you find

yourself at the end  
of winter's long, cold  
rope, the blossoms open

like pink thimbles  
and that black dollop  
of shine called

bumblebee stumbles in.

- Apple Blossoms, Susan Kelly-DeWitt

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<sup>1</sup> Northern side of the backyard, in the rosebush that grows in the fence line. Blooms every year in late May and signals the end of school until August.

<sup>2</sup> Next to the driveway. The bulbs only flower in April: pick them quickly.

<sup>3</sup> Mixed with the elm beside the house. No matter the season, no matter the weather, it grows there.

<sup>4</sup> Old apple tree that always drops its fruit over the fence into the Gray's yard. They complain every year.

<sup>5</sup> Scattered through the yard between the dandelions and the clover, both red and white. Often found in minuscule bouquets handed to parents by grubby children.

<sup>6</sup> Underneath the front porch and bushes lining its stairs. We find rabbits hiding in its shade each spring.

My parents have had a long-standing feud with the forsythia bush outside my window for as long as I can remember. Every couple of years they hack it back to its woody stems, painting weed killer on the supposedly vulnerable ends, and every couple of years the obstinate shrub grows spitefully back into its full glory. It seems to get bigger each time. Watching my parents through the glass I can't help but root for the forsythia, but it doesn't need my encouragement in its gleeful rebellion.

Also known as bluevine, climbing milkweed, dog's-collar, Enslens vine, peavine, sandvine, smooth anglepod, or smooth swallow-wort, honeyvine milkweed\* is aggressive and invasive.

*Dave's Garden*

-\*Grows throughout the fenceline, but its seed pods are often opened prematurely by children wanting to feel the explosion of fluff between their fingers.

I could never bring myself to like the boy in *The Giving Tree*, and I didn't understand the tree. How could anyone or anything bring themselves to the point where they have nothing left to give the one who asks of them?

I understand her now. There was a time I drained every ounce of energy that I had in order to be useful to others. But to be happy in this world is to carve out a spot for yourself; something that you never give away. Something that you always keep.

*"And the tree was happy."* The tree had nothing of herself left to give; nothing to call her own.

There's an old apple tree in my backyard. It twines and twists towards the sun, and though it's old and frail, it clings to life with a ferocity that I can only admire. And I suppose the undergrowth creeping beneath our front porch is technically a weed, but it has a heady scent and a flower that easily pulls off the vine: perfect for little fingers, little hands itching to bury themselves into the world.

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance. Pray you, love, remember.  
*Hamlet, 4.5.154-55*

I wanted to be a florist when I was a child. I wanted to surround myself with color and texture; I felt a joy in considering a life filled with nature. I would spend hours dreaming of owning my own store, doors flung open to welcome in the golden hour, and arranging marigolds, peonies, cornflowers into bouquets to be given to mothers and lovers alike. It wasn't to be, though I can still walk through the evening glow and watch trees blow in the wind. I can still enjoy the sight of marigolds lining a sidewalk.

The only thing left of what used to be is you.  
*-Redwood Tree, Cam*

despite knowing  
 they won't be here for long  
 they still choose to live  
 their brightest lives

-*sunflowers*

Rupi Kaur

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### Meanings

Basil	Good wishes
Carnation, Yellow	Disdain, Rejection*
Chamomile	Patience in adversity
Coriander	Hidden Worth, Merit
Edelweiss	Courage, Devotion
Iris	A message
Lilac	Joy of youth
Morning Glory	Affection
Oak	Strength
Rue	Grace, Clear vision
Tulip, Yellow	Sunshine in your smile*
Wallflower	Faithfulness in adversity

- *The Old Farmer's Almanac*; A selection

\*Carnations are frilled and filled with joy. The yellow ones are my favorite—every happy thing is reflected in them to me. The “correct” meaning of yellow flowers is often tied to despair or pain; when I look at them, though, all I can see is gold washed clean by the spring showers.

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The audience beyond the stage never looks at the bouquets of polyester flowers with enough of a discerning eye to tell the daffodils from the cattleya orchids, but I find a quiet joy in arranging them. On either side people paint in bright tones of sapphire and amethyst. Behind me is a friend, hanging a small painting of a young child on a hastily-built “wall”, and above and beyond the stage people are blending lights together in an attempt to bring a morning sunbeam indoors. They’ll never quite match that radiance, but our job is to make the audience forget, for just a moment, that they are not in this three-walled simulacrum of a drawing room. No two will see the show the same. Each person grows their own

meaning, each cupping their truth close to their chest as it twines through their fingers; even the best story means nothing without people to tell it and others to listen.

If you look up beyond the lights to the ceiling, you can see the sun shining in through a small open hatch, encouraging our efforts.

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,  
 Old Time is still a-flying;  
 And this same flower that smiles today  
 Tomorrow will be dying.

- *To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time*, 1-4, Robert Herrick

Theatre is often described as ephemeral; a fleeting moment in time that once gone can't be brought back. On the stage we cling to each second that we have and make much of our time. We take a script and turn it into joy, tears, belief. Once each scene is played out it will never be performed the same way again. The audience is seeing a piece of art that by its nature can never be replicated. Every moment matters. It can't be relived. One day the show will close, and we must go on with our lives and onto the next.

Blow hope to terror; blow seeing to blind  
 (blow pity to envy and soul to mind)  
 —whose hearts are mountains, roots are trees,  
 it's they shall cry hello to the spring  
 - *What if a much of a which of a wind*,  
 13-16, E. E. Cummings

As the flower blooms, it will never look the same way twice. One day a petal will unfurl and the next it will be blown away. Until its end, though, it will climb its way to the sun and take in each day as it comes.

"Living in the time it takes to blink,  
 I think, is how we're meant to be living"  
 - "The Secret of Happiness",  
*Daddy Long Legs*

She walked to school as slowly as she could.  
 She dragged her feet in the dirt.

Chrysanthemum,  
 Chrysanthemum,  
 Chrysanthemum.

- *Chrysanthemum*, Kevin Henkes

The forsythia is one of the first shrubs to flower in the spring, often opening wide into the sharp knife of winter winds that linger until March. It's the first hint of yellow that I would see before walking into the still morning air to catch the bus, before the sun rose. In a way it's a sign of hope for a new beginning; a hint of the dawn before it comes over the horizon.

I think of the forsythia in terms of its hardiness, its drive for life. It doesn't need much tending to become something large and beautiful. It grows strong on its own, it cares for itself. It doesn't give sections of itself away to those who presume to know it. A forsythia screams its name to the bitter air; I am here, I am alive, I will hold my stake in this land. I am here. I am here. I am here.

Is that not why we're here? To call our names to the sky, to make order from the chaos that surrounds us?

Are we not here to make the flowers mean something?

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"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

- *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.43

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I can remember picking mint next to the apple tree in my back yard; crouching in the grass, pulling up little handfuls of the stuff with the tree at my back. I thought that tree was a hundred feet tall back then, and that it would never die. The apples were always small, but so was I back then.

It's odd going back home now and looking out the kitchen window. I swear it gets shorter every time I make the drive. Some of its leaves grow strong, but the branch I would swing my way up to to read my little fantasy novels is dark and brittle. Blooms don't grow on it in the spring, and apples don't fall from that branch in the summer anymore.

I've thanked the old apple tree for every scraped knee, each little bouquet of blossoms that I've gotten from it. My hope now is that it clings to life for as long as it can; that its roots twine deep into the earth it carved out for itself over the years. Though it's shorter to me every year, it still reaches for the sun's warm embrace.

And though rosemary's for remembrance, I keep a sprig of mint pressed inside of those same fantasies I held in the tree's branches.

Though thoughts, deep-rooted in my heart,  
 Like pine-trees dark and high,  
 Subdue the light of noon, and breathe  
 A low and ceaseless sigh;

This memory brightens o'er the past,  
 As when the sun, concealed  
 Behind some cloud that near us hangs  
 Shines on a distant field.

- *A Gleam of Sunshine*,  
 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 49-56

I believe in sunlight along a windowsill. I believe in the joy of children tearing at mint, burying their hands in the earth. I believe in others. I believe in dandelions reaching up through the merest cracks in pavement, in trees standing against the wind, in pink rosebushes twining through fences. I believe in the storm that blows through the night and the sun that will shine in the morning. There will be a better tomorrow; I will one day be okay. I have belief. I have faith in what I see painted around me every day.

That which has become  
 that which is still becoming  
 and that which is owed.

- *Fate*, Durlene Westfall

"Light's such a fickle thing but I sing for it."

- *Weatherman*, 15, Chard Deniord

I now know the ragweed from the goldenrod, and the blinding  
 beauty of green.

- *Another Antipastoral*, 5-6, Vievee Francis

Tomorrow's dawn is a promise that will fulfill.

Never mind if the sky does not quite agree.

- *The Promise We Live By*,

19-20, Simon J. Ortiz

Through shades of desaturated blues and sooty shades, I'm aiming for yellow. Pure, unadulterated, refined yellow in all its morning glory; yellow like the walls of my childhood bedroom, yellow like the shimmer of dew-dappled-daffodils, yellow like the glow of a new dawn. I am aiming for the heady scent of the shrubs along the stairways, of the weeds under the porch.

Yellow flowers often symbolize rejection. I suppose that's still true; yellow cuts through the darkness, turning it into less than nothing.

Nothing is left but me and you  
 and here I write my words for you  
 O my dearest of all that is to be  
 O my cup, O' Chamomile\* tea...  
 - *Chamomile, 21-24, Taher Shemaly*

*Chamomile	Patience in Adversity
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- *The Old Farmer's Almanac; A reminder*

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**for·syth·i·a**

/fôr'siTHĕə/

1. To exist; strength, a new beginning

I see skies of blue and clouds of white  
 Bright blessed days, dark sacred nights  
 And I think to myself  
 What a wonderful world

- *What a Wonderful World,*  
 Louis Armstrong