

Blooming Season - Cultivating Wild Tenacity

April 24 - June 5, 2022



What does it mean to **Cultivate Wild Tenacity** in the Blooming Season?

Definitions:

(with consultation of [Oxford Languages/Lexico](#), [vocabulary.com](#), [yourdictionary.com](#))

Cultivate

verb. prepare and use (land) for crops or gardening

e.g., *"the small farmers who cultivated the land created a co-op"*

verb. try to acquire or develop (a quality, sentiment, or skill)

e.g., *"they cultivated a more inclusive vocabulary"*

Wild

adj. living or growing in the natural environment; free; not domesticated or cultivated

e.g., *"a herd of wild horses"*

adj. in a state of extreme emotion; passionate

e.g., *"wild with anger" or "wild with joy"*

Tenacity

noun. strongly holding on to an idea or a thing; determination

e.g., *"you have to admire the tenacity of the suffragettes"*

noun. the quality or fact of continuing to exist; persistence

e.g., *"the tenacity of beliefs, myths, and culture of indigenous peoples"*

Hey you,

Be wild. Go bananas. Get free.

Did you do it? Probably not. These things take, as it turns out, time and intention.

This blooming season's theme of *Cultivating Wild Tenacity* is a curious, paradoxical invitation. How do you tend to something turbulent and fierce? In other words, how does one *own* a cat?

Our cat's namesake Hildegard von Bingen was an 11th century abbess, theologian, mystic, composer, naturalist, and medical writer. She lived in the Rhine river valley surrounded by damp, green lushness, and her writing on health and theology drew frequently on the word VIRIDITAS. While this word meant change to St. Augustine and St. Hildegard herself used it to mean a great many things, viriditas is full of life. Meaning green and growth as well as freshness and vigor, viriditas is the greening power of nature to nourish and heal. It's abundant in the springtime and overflowing when you bite into the first tomato that you have grown yourself. It's the constant, ever-present divine love that transfers from leaf to you every time you eat a plant. Our interdependence is woven with viriditas, and according to Hildegard, we are not simply to witness this green gift but we are to actively seek it out because every day offers this encounter with God.

Hildegard was intense. As I consider the massive body of work she left behind, the writing and the music, the language she invented, the ecstatic visions she had, I have often wondered if it was psychedelics that cracked open the doors of perception and brought down the walls of a too small reality into the new world that she was co-creating. Apparently it was viriditas?

With images of flowering vines, green leaves poking out of cracks in a parking lot, and garden volunteers removing invasive plants to make possible native wildlife, I invite you this month into the spiritual task of cultivating wild tenacity. Whether through seeking out lush greenery, finding more opportunities to play, or instituting a daily family scream, create a little more space this blooming season for whatever is most vigorous, most free, most fresh, and most healing within you.

Love and courage,
Rev. Shari
First Unitarian Church of Rochester



SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Select one of the exercises below to practice, and come prepared to discuss the experience and your thoughts and feelings about it with your group.

Exercise A. Riding the Wave of Universe Expansion



In his book, *Neurodharma* ([Goodreads link](#)), Rick Hansen, PhD explores the neuroscience of awakening. Dr. Hansen posits that the universe is ever expanding and we are on the front edge of that “event horizon.” Being on the edge is a wild place, like riding a [rollercoaster](#) – we can let go of control & enjoy the ride, or panic & cling fearfully. Staying in the *now* requires tenacity! Write down some experiences where you have keenly felt yourself on the “event horizon.” Are/were you enjoying or fearing the ride? Share these experiences with your group.

Exercise B. Cultivating Justice

Many people have been saddened & astounded in our recent past, watching the polarization of political ideologies & extreme actions that drive the wedge deeper and threaten the foundation of democracy & equity. What actions can we take to advance the cause of justice? [Side with Love](#) has engaged many in our congregation, as part of UUs & allies nationwide, to rally around actions that support people who have been oppressed, including LGBTQ+ injustice & disenfranchised voters (thru [UU the Vote](#)). Whether writing postcards, making phone calls or on the streets, people are connecting with voters, legislators, & communities to increase visibility, encourage tenacity, and demand justice. It may feel insignificant, but Jessica Craven, in her blogpost (see Resources, page 9), says, “*Even the tiniest action can - and often does - change the course of history. So let’s alter the future for the better one more time!*” What ways do your drops of tenacity pour into a steady stream of justice? In what actions have you contributed (or are currently contributing) to help bend that arc?

Exercise C. Creativity in a Garden or Wild Place

Meet with members of your Soul Matters team in the church garden, or at the Rochester Conservatory, or another place where nature abounds. Bring your cell phone, camera, or art supplies to capture the plants or creatures that seem to be blooming or wildly tenacious - or both. Share your pictures and reflections on UU values/principles as they pertain to blooming, cultivating, wildness, and tenacity at your next group meeting.



Exercise D. Cultivating Cultural Tenacity

Explore how tenacity has helped parts of your ancestral culture endure. Whether your ancestors have been in North America for many generations or only a handful, there may be some cultural elements that have remained. Perhaps foods, handcrafts, or traditional dress have withstood the test of time. What internal/external force has kept them in your heart and why? Share these with your soul matters group verbally or with photos.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions aren't "homework" that need to be covered entirely. Instead, simply pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The questions often lead not to answers, but more questions

1. Read the Thich Nhat Hanh quote below (Resources, page 8). How do you identify with these words? Name people in your life who you "inter-are" with.
2. If you are aware of family history or have done some ancestral exploration, cite some examples of tenacious behavior from any ancestors that have changed your trajectory today?
3. Can tenacity ever become an obstruction? Watch the below YouTube titled "The Genius of Tenacity," (Resources, page 9) and see if you have ever experienced this.
4. The words 'cultivate' and 'wild' can seem like words at the opposite ends of a spectrum. In what ways could they be related?
5. Examine with curiosity a particularly wild and tenacious plant in your neighborhood, yard, a park, or on your daily route. What do you think and feel when you observe its silent determination?
6. Read the excerpt from the below poem entitled Tenacity (page 7). Have there been acquaintances that have thrown your friendship away? How have you handled that?



7. As a parent, friend, or lover, how do we cultivate wild tenacity in those we love by holding loosely? (refer below to the poetry of Kahlil Gibran, page 7 and the song by the Temple University Women's Choir on page 10).

8. Through the centuries, people have cultivated creative ideas leading to inventions made far into the future. Read the childrens' book (Resources, page 7) about Ada Lovelace. Reflect on historical figures you may know about - how did their tenacity bring us new insights & inventions? How were other inventors inspired by them to persevere, too? What visions are being cultivated today for a future invention?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Land Acknowledgement: We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, Keepers of the Western Door and part of the Haudenosaunee People, on whose ancestral land the Unitarian Universalist Churches in Rochester and Canandaigua now stand. The First People were stewards of this sacred land thousands of years before European explorers landed on the shores of North America. Indigenous wisdom was cultivated over the centuries by observing and living in harmony with the land.

FROM UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

Readings for Chalice Lighting

[Our Souls Speak Spring](#)

By [Evin Carvill Ziemer](#)

"If we lived in another climate
Our souls might speak other languages
We might speak oasis or permafrost, dry season or
monsoon
But our souls speak spring
Our souls speak green shoots pushing through last year's
leaves
Our souls speak flower buds stretching to sun
Our souls speak mud puddle and nest building, damp earth
and worm castings, tiny green leaves and frog choruses
We speak spring because spring sings in us
We gather to nurture our faith in our own growing
Our own courage to push through
Our own blossoming in beauty
Our own small part in the spring of this world
Come, let us worship together"



[Legacy Chalice Lighting](#)

By [Paul Sprecher](#)

"We light this chalice to honor the memory of those who have come before us,
kindling flames of wisdom in dark times,
willing to challenge orthodoxy even at great personal risk,
giving us a legacy of freedom and a love of truth,
A legacy that warms our hearts and lights our paths."

Readings for Chalice Extinguishing

Closing Words for Hard Times

By [Rev. Maureen Killoran](#)

"No matter how weak or how frightened we may feel, we each have gifts that can make a difference in the world. In this coming week, may you do at least one thing to support the broken; to welcome the stranger; to celebrate what is worthy; to do the work of justice and love.
Be strong.
Be connected.
Each day, act — so you may be a little more whole."

Remembering our spiritual, courageous ancestors

By [Rev. Rhys Williams](#), nephew of Rev. David Rhys Williams, minister emeritus of First Unitarian Church of Rochester

“Remembering our spiritual, courageous ancestors who forsook oppression with security to gain freedom with opportunity,
may we go forth to master ourselves by accepting duty with responsibility,
by showing balance in our judgments and by having breadth of vision in our deliberations.

May we be exemplars of that spirit, moving forward with conviction and commitment,
with unity and without uniformity, with brotherhood and sisterhood to serve the truth that sets us free. Amen.”

[Flower Ceremony - UU Tradition](#)

This springtime ritual was created in 1923 by Unitarian minister Norbert Capek of Prague, who felt the need for a symbolic ritual that would bind people more closely together. People celebrated the ritual in [Nazi concentration camps](#) to keep their spirits tenacious and offer a ray of hope. This ceremony or communion was eventually introduced to the U.S. by Rev. Maya Capek, Norbert's widow. By exchanging flowers, we show our willingness to walk together in our search for truth, disregarding all that might divide us. Each person takes home a flower brought by someone else - thus symbolizing our shared celebration in community.

SACRED TEXTS & RITUALS

Tao Te Ching (#54, excerpt)

[Tao Te Ching - Lao Tzu - chapter 54](#)

“Cultivate Virtue in yourself,
And Virtue will be real.
Cultivate it in the family,
And Virtue will abound.
Cultivate it in the village,
And Virtue will grow.
Cultivate it in the nation,
And Virtue will be abundant.
Cultivate it in the universe,
And Virtue will be everywhere.”



photo cred: **Greg Rakozy/Unsplash.**

[Quran \(3:200\)](#)

"O believers! Patiently endure, persevere, stand on guard, and be mindful of Allah, so you may be successful." (More information on "sabr" or "endurance" <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabr>)

New Testament - Hebrews 10:23 ([New Revised Standard Version](#))

“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.”

Pagan Ritual

[Beltane](#) is a cross-quarter Gaelic celebration held on May Day, halfway between the spring equinox and summer solstice. Beltane honors life and celebrates the peak of Spring, while anticipating the beginning of summer. The rituals feature activities (often by romantic couples) of gathering wildflowers & lighting bonfires, with more tenacious individuals leaping the flames! (Do not attempt this at home.)

POETRY

The Rose that Grew from Concrete

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZWwWqX7R8E>
Tupac Shakur, (1971-1996), American rapper & actor

Did you hear about the rose that grew
from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's law is wrong
it learned to walk without having feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams,
it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from concrete
when no one else even cared.

Tenacity (an excerpt)

by Myra (July 2019).

[Hello Poetry site](#)

"...Perhaps my most favorite people are the most tenacious
I proudly show off my friends and family with tenacious hearts like the most luminescent jewels.
The acquaintances that throw decades of friendships away in the name of love, power ... Image.
Their love is only embers, floating on winds that go elsewhere.
I do not intend on keeping them."

On Children

by [Kahlil Gibran](#)

(excerpt for Mothers' Day, though for all parents, teachers, or anyone in a relationship with anyone, for that matter. See the musical rendition under Songs.)

"...You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and [they] bend you with their might that their arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;

For even as they love the arrow that flies, so they love also the bow that is stable."

BOOKS – links to Monroe County Library System

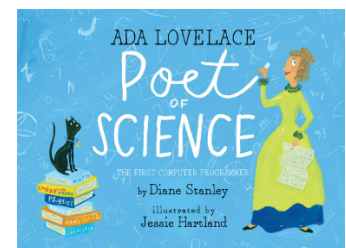
[Ada Lovelace: Poet of Science: The First Computer Programmer](#)

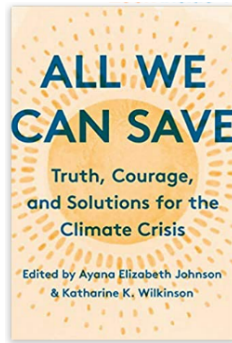
By [Diane Stanley](#), American author

When combining cultivated interests with imagination, amazing inventions can occur. Ada Lovelace was careful and tenacious in her experiments, but also opened her mind to creativity. For ages 4-8.



photo cred: James Lambert





[All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis](#)

Edited by Drs. [Ayana Elizabeth Johnson](#) & [Katharine K. Wilkinson](#) (2020)

Excerpt: [Adrienne Rich](#) (1929-2012), American poet, essayist, & feminist

My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
so much has been destroyed

I have cast my lot with those
who age after age, perversely,

with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.

[Ain't Burned All the Bright](#)

[Jason Reynolds](#) & [Jason Griffin](#), illustrator

Written during 2020, “the strangest year of our lives,” the author & illustrator discover how to survive a pandemic, being Black in the US, and “...what it means not to be able to breathe, AND how the people & things at your fingertips are actually the oxygen you need most.”



[Take What You Need: Life lessons After Losing Everything](#)

(In Spirit UUA Bookstore link)

By [Rev. Jen Crow](#)

After losing their home and belongings in a house fire, Rev. Crow and family opened their hearts to the multiple gifts from those who surrounded them. As friends and strangers came forth to offer love and support, Jen began to tenaciously reflect and write about multiple hardships she had endured in her life. A shift occurred for her as she began to look at her past experiences through a lens of love.

QUOTATIONS



“My, my. What beautiful blossoms we have this year. But look! This one’s **late**. But I bet that when it blooms, it will be the most beautiful of all.”

~ Fa Zhou to his daughter, Mulan, who has just miserably failed her interview with the village matchmaker and told that she “would never bring her family honor.” She goes on to take her father’s place in the army, help defeat the Huns, and save the lives of the general’s son and the emperor.

Disney’s [Mulan](#) (1998)

Link to the [Ballad of Mulan](#).

You are me and I am you. Isn't it obvious that we inter-are? You cultivate the flower in yourself so that I will be beautiful. I transform the garbage in myself so that you will not have to suffer."

~ **Thich Nhat Hanh**

"It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view ... This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that will one day grow. We water seeds already planted, know that they hold future promise. ... We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities ... We are prophets of a future not our own." ~ **John Cardinal Dearden**

“Let me tell you the secret that has led me to my goal: my strength lies solely in my tenacity.”
~ **Louis Pasteur**, French chemist, inventor

“We’ll all make mistakes in our creative lives and we might as well make worthy ones – honest ones. When we try to play it safe, we get less inspiration. Working in a bold way, trying things out, going where we feel truly called to go, gives us an expansive, free, and empowered feeling... We need to go the extra mile, taking care to make the work as good as it can be *in this moment, in this day*. That’s all. Then we show up again the next day.”

~ **Cat Bennett**, from *Making Art a Practice: How to Be the Artist You Are*

“We often think that strength and flexibility are opposite sides of the same coin. But when they are united with resiliency, you can literally move the earth. Resiliency united with strength and flexibility creates beauty in the world, and creates new spaces for life to flourish.” ~ **Tim Atkins**, from [“To Be Resilient” on UUA Worship Web](https://uua.org/braverwiser/be-resilient) uua.org/braverwiser/be-resilient

ARTICLES

Rudderals have tenacity to grow in unlikely places, by *Kate Finch*, Oct 24, 2021

<https://www.observertoday.com/life/sunday-lifestyles/2021/10/ruderals-have-tenacity-to-grow-in-unlikely-places/>

Ruderals are plant life that show up in the least likely places. They are often the “weeds” that make space for other plants to thrive. And they are full of seeds to send out, often landing and sitting quietly waiting for an opportunity to take hold. That tenacious behavior starts the succession of more plants to come...

Hairy Bittercress, [Wildfooduk.com](https://www.wildfooduk.com)

<https://www.wildfooduk.com/edible-wild-plants/hairy-bittercress/>

Also called Hoary Bittercress, they are everywhere - despised as weeds and their ability to shoot their seeds far & wide. But, apparently, they are good in salads! The way to find out if you have Hairy Bittercress is to have a little nibble...



VIDEOS

Bloom where you are planted, TEDxHBU, 2018 *Jade Shuffler*

Jade Shuffler, a Nursing-Honors student at Houston Baptist University & motivational speaker, challenges us to grow & flourish despite the circumstances we might face - stop complaining and just keep growing. We must remind ourselves that we are not in control, yet shift our mindset to believe that things can be better... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rc6DPCMj2A>



The Genius of Tenacity *Patrick Lencioni*, an American writer who focuses on team management in the business world. In this 2:05 min video, he shares his thoughts on the role of tenacious people on a team. <https://youtu.be/LoyXIFMT8IQ>

Indigenous in Plain Sight, TEDxBoulder, 2018. Gregg Deal displays an example of cultivating cultural tenacity as he speaks on Indigenous identity. https://youtu.be/s3FL9uhTH_s (13:21 min)

BLOGS

[Chop Wood, Carry Water](#), by Jessica Craven,

"... your small actions make a difference: your postcards, your calls, your volunteer hours. We must think of them not just in terms of the small gains we'll make individually, but in terms of the totality of the gains we will make together." Visit Jessica's blog for other ideas to help in ways that matter to you.

FRIDAY POSTCARDS – another way to help "get out the vote," aside from UU the Vote, is the local group, Friday Postcards, meeting on Fridays at [New City Cafe](#). You can write with the group, or pick up cards, stamps, suggested messages, & addresses and write at home. Contact Kathi Albertini by email at kathialbertini@gmail.com to be added to the weekly distribution list.

SONGS

I Know This Rose Will Open, SLT 396

by Mary E. Grigolia

Sung by [Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout](#), Director of Worship & Music

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

Audio mix & video editing: Mike Halerz

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xB62-Hjh1VI>

Stand Up (from motion picture *Harriet*), by Cynthia Erivo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3HICKj-4Zs>

This is an inspiring song about the perseverance and bravery of Harriet Tubman, leading her people to freedom, at tremendous risk to herself.

On Children (words by Kahlil Gibran), by Ysaye Barnwell, an American singer and composer.

Sung by Temple University Women's Choir <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJRAVnnW2hY>



This Soul Matters packet blossomed with the help of Suzy Farrell, Mary Hammele, Amy Stockwell, Rev. AJ, Rev. Shari, and the Packet-Writing Team.