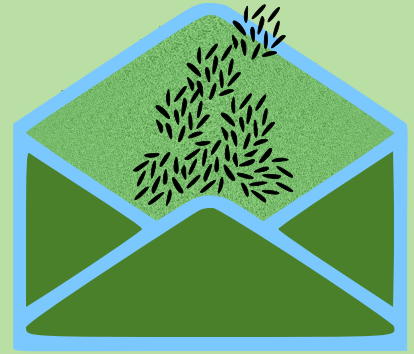


# Ishtar's International Network of Feral Gardens

## DISPATCH 001



*"All flourishing is mutual." -Robin Wall Kimmerer*

*"Disconnection. That's how this future began. One moment in time. It radiated outward until no one even remembered that connection was possible anymore. But it is. The need to connect is at our core as sentient beings. It takes time, effort, and understanding. Sometimes, it feels impossible. But if we work at it, miracles can happen." -Star Trek: Discovery Season 3 Episode 13*

Since the earliest days of the pandemic, SAVAC has been running an experimental land-based initiative called *Ishtar's International Network of Feral Gardens*. The namesake of the Network, the goddess of fertility Ishtar (also known as: Lady of the Date Clusters, Inanna, Anahita, Aphrodite, or Venus) is derived from an ancient Mesopotamian tale about how Ishtar's passing into the underworld rendered the earth fruitless. Hearing the pleas of barren lands, the gods agreed to split Ishtar's time between the underworld and overworld, giving us distinct seasons.

This year, in what feels like catastrophic times, we delve deeper into the wisdom of Ishtar's story to lend perspective amid overwhelming grief. Ishtar's ascents and descents from the abundant overworld to the austere and precarious underworld resonate in deeper time—from seasons to epochs. We are in a climate of worldwide fascism, the midst of genocide, an ongoing pandemic, and the warmest seasons in recorded history. All of these apocalypses have been part of severing connection on individual and collective scales. As Ishtar's Mesopotamian devotees would say, "No one comes back from the underworld unmarked." In contemporary speak, this translates to "there is no "back-to-normal."

Under this fascism, nature is construed as an irrational, disordered and hostile realm destined to be conquered. This ideology attempts to subordinate nature, and detach us from our instincts. In order for this ideology to take hold, the individual must distance or disengage the empathetic parts of themselves that can relate to difference to enable themselves to believe that the murders of others (genocide) or poisoning of the planet (ecocide) is just.

To find pathways for a more whole, co-existent future, *Ishtar's International Network of Feral Gardens* encourages the exploration of the tensions between the wild (feral) and the domestic (garden), to observe and relearn the interdependence of all beings—human, animal, and plant life. Through the cultivation of flowers, fruits, vegetables, herbs and medicinal plants, we cultivate our ability to relate to one another and find compassion for ourselves.

There have been an overwhelming number of writing and art projects that investigate and prompt greater observation of these themes. In this Dispatch, we are sharing two annotated bibliographies: first on disconnection—writings on fascism and dis-integration of the self/collective; and second on connection—writings on earthwork, land, and belonging.

## DISCONNECTION

Bollas, Christopher. 2012. "**The Fascist State of Mind**" in *The Christopher Bollas Reader*. Taylor & Francis.

*Rather than assuming that liberalism is sanity and fascism is insanity, Christopher Bollas argues that a fascist state of mind starts with the killing off of parts of the self that can empathetically hold opposition. This disconnection with self enables the de-humanization of others.*

Morrison, Toni. 2020. "**Racism and Facism**" in *The Source of Self-Regard : Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations*. First Vintage International edition. New York: Vintage International.

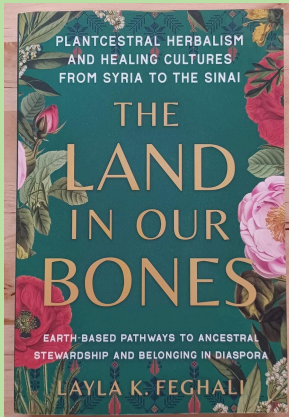
*Morrison wrote this short speech in 1995. It is a step-by-step breakdown of how some people are de-humanized by fascism in order for a society to consent to genocide.*

## CONNECTION



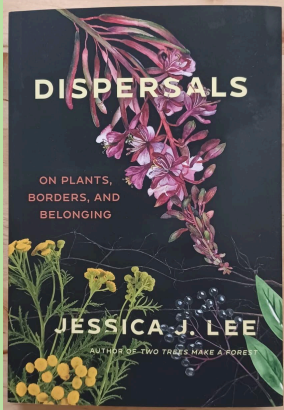
Farrell, Marchelle. 2023. *Uprooting : From the Caribbean to the Countryside - Finding Home In An English Country Garden*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Canongate Books Ltd.

*Originally hailing from Trinidad, Marchelle Farelle moved to an English village. This memoir delves into her relationship with plant life on a colonized island which is ripe with people and plants from all over the world and compares it to making a home, life and garden in England, the belly of colonizations. Through her earthwork, Marshelle seeks to understand how to find home in England. She discovers that England's plant life is as cosmopolitan as all of the places that England colonized*



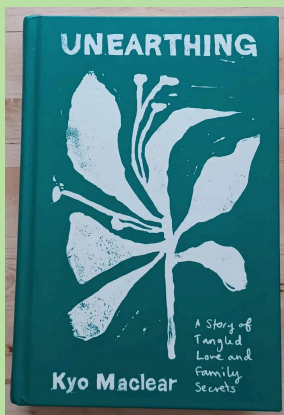
Feghali, Layla K. 2024. *The Land in Our Bones : Plantcestral Herbalism and Healing Cultures from Syria to the Sinai*. Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books.

*In this book, Layla Feghali weaves provocations and prompts for diasporic people who struggle to find embodied and relational experiences of cultural wisdom. She looks to her relationship with the land of her ancestors over the course of time from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial and wars to see what plants can teach her about herself. Simultaneously, she acknowledges that residing on land that does not belong to her nor her ancestors provides different teachings and that belonging is somewhere in that land/time continuum.*



Lee, Jessica J. 2024. *Dispersals : On Plants, Borders, and Belonging*. First Catapult edition. New York: Catapult.

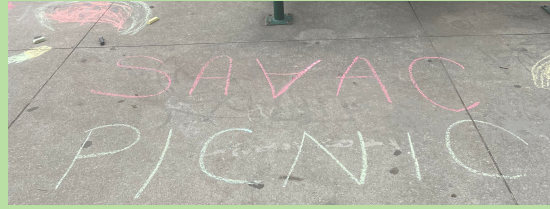
*Written across several geographies and over an expanse of time, Jessica Lee looks at the way that plants travel alongside humans. She delves into the idea that plants are rooted (which humans read as static) and yet they grow outwards and migrate. Lee works with plants to understand how different beings find belonging, adaptation and assimilation in non-native contexts.*



Maclear, Kyo. 2024. *Unearthing : A Story of Tangled Love and Family Secrets*. Toronto: Vintage Canada.

*This memoir is structured using the metaphor of Japanese micro seasons. Each chapter serves to be a short meditation on kinship (chosen and blood), love, grief, race, and gender. Using the garden as a methodology, Kyo Maclear explores the intimacy of what grows, what is tended to, what is buried and what is composted.*





**Thank you for being in community with us!**

*It was beautiful to share fruit, feelings and be together on Saturday, June 8, 2024. As a part of Ishtar's International Network of Feral Gardens, the theme for this year's community picnic was something to do with our hands when words don't suffice. Palestine Bakeshop plied us with fresh, hot, Mananeesh, taboon and pizzas straight out of the Christie Pits wood-burning oven.*

### **Lamenting Storytelling Series**

***We invited 4 artists to share how their relationships to the earth grounds them in times of grief. Whether it be tending to plants after losing a loved one, Lamenting the destruction of the environment, or holding the deep sorrow of witnessing genocide and rising fascism. Reflecting on seasons of grief, the growing cycle provides a pathway for making sense of the tangible and intangible aspects of loss. Tending to life is to tend to death. From sowing flowers beside tombs and planting trees to honour the dead, to using plants to detoxify soil and mitigate the climate crisis, to retreating to a quiet garden to mourn alongside birds. In times of grief, we return to our relationship to the earth in a myriad of ways.***

***Follow @savac\_ on instagram from June 10-July 1 to witness Farida Rady, Dana Prieto, Dayananda Nagaraju and Mariam Magsi's stories.***