

Topic: Trees

My Love of Trees
by Liz Gibbons

In 1972 my husband and I decided we no longer wanted to endure the long winters in Rochester, New York, where we had lived for nine years. One long weekend we flew into Stapleton Airport and rented a car to drive to Colorado Springs to decide if that city was to be our new home. As we were halfway to Castle Rock, I exclaimed to my husband, "There are no trees here." That was when I realized how much I loved trees.

In the backyard of my childhood home was a majestic white oak tree. It was outside my bedroom window. When my parents had been looking for a lot on which to build their home they had chosen this lot because of the oak tree. When there was a violent thunderstorm at night my mother worried that the tree would be hit and come crashing down into my bedroom.

Three blocks from our home was Happy Hollow, a large woods owned by the city. We neighborhood kids loved to explore it. The Girl Scout Council had an area where they had built a fire pit, and around it were several rows of benches made from logs to sit on. There were several trails in the woods and a hill named Monkeys Peak that we could climb. From the top we could see the Wabash River below that separated West Lafayette and Lafayette.

All the places I have lived in the east and mid-west have had an abundance of trees. I was delighted when I was considering moving to Windsor Gardens that it had so many trees and other beautiful landscaping for I was living in Atlanta which is known as a "city in the forest." Forty-eight percent of the metro area is covered in trees. The front of our Atlanta home was graced with a beautiful white oak tree. In addition there were ten other large deciduous trees in the front, side, and back yards plus two tall pine trees. Oh, did we have a lot of leaves to rake up in the late fall. In the springtime Atlanta was ablaze in beautiful color when the Redbuds, Dogwoods, Bradford Pear trees, and azaleas were in bloom.

About two years ago I found a fascinating book at the library, *The Hidden Life of Trees, What They Feel, How They Communicate* by Peter Wohlleben. In it I learned trees in natural forest settings care for each other by sharing nutrients and information through their root system, a prime example of interdependence. They also warn other trees about predators by releasing odors. Individual trees in yards and other locations lack that community connection and don't live as long. The longest living tree is a Spruce tree in Sweden that is over 9,500 years old.

Trees are a marvelous creation. They provide oxygen, shade, protection, and food. They help prevent soil erosion and provide a habitat for wildlife. They mark the seasons. Who doesn't enjoy their colorful displays in the fall. For me, walking in the woods brings a sense of calm and a oneness with nature and the universe.

