

BLOOM

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In Spring of 1513, with its flowers in full bloom, Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon landed on the eastern shore of the peninsula where I live. Wanting to claim it for Spain, he named it Florida, from the Spanish word “flor,” or flower.

Thirty-one years later, Portuguese sailors traveling across longitudes on the other side of the planet, were taken by Taiwan’s natural beauty. They named the place “Ilha Formosa,” or beautiful island.

In time, others followed and eventually colonized both presuming that everything before them -- from finite natural resources to the lives and labor of the indigenous population -- was theirs for the taking. It is an approach that endures to this day: The collective need for sustainability and balance is trumped by individuals’ insatiable want for more, more and more.

Almost everything in my home was made somewhere else. It was produced in a land where the cost of labor is cheaper than in Florida. It was manufactured and packed into a container and shipped across the sea, along with its huge carbon footprint. Every day, containers sail across the Earth’s longitudes filled with products consumers are taught to “need.” Containers filled with products engineered by man for near-term obsolescence, so that consumers constantly grow their demand for the newer model. The upgrade, the latest thing.

I want us to instead demand things slowly engineered by nature to stand the test of time, products that never lose their usefulness because they are made for a true purpose. Things that are renewable, sustainable. Life-giving.

I imagine a container of things we actually need. Or better yet, things we shouldn't rid ourselves from. Things like wildflowers.

Wildflowers magically rise from the soil in a triumphant celebration of color and form. They are architectural masterpieces, miniature cathedrals. Ever building and ever decaying. And ever regenerating themselves again according to plan.

Wildflowers hold medicinal powers to combat diseases we have yet to encounter. To solve problems we have yet begun to imagine.

Wildflowers allow the planet's pollinators, with whom they co-evolved through time, to fulfill their joint responsibility of sustaining life's fragile web. An intricate and complex biological process that makes Earth verdant, sustains all animals (including humans) and balances atmospheric gases (that accelerate global climate change).

Obviously, wildflowers would naturally continue to blanket our planet were it not for the displacement caused by the concrete we've poured --and the parcels we've platted-- to grow our society.

Let them bloom.

Wildflowers allow us to forget who we've imagined ourselves to be and instead remind us of who we really are: Beings made from the same four DNA nucleotides that have given life to everything that lives, has ever lived or will ever live on planet Earth.

Beings who share the same biology with every other living organism. And, as such, share every threat.

Beings who understand that our world is global not necessarily because goods are shipped across expansive oceans but because it is ecologically interconnected and interdependent across every imaginable expanse, across every longitude.

Understanding this will allow us to ship not just better goods but, more importantly, real goodness across the Earth.

Goodness in behavior. Goodness in stewardship nurtured by a clear understanding that we have to live in balance and harmony with the ecosystem that gave rise to and sustains our species.

We need to better coexist by better tempering our personal demand for excess so that the greater good wins. So that our growth is managed in a way that sustains not just humans but all living beings with whom we share (and need for our survival on) this planet. Not just now, but for generations (and millennia) to come.

We need to see home well beyond our four walls and learn how to coexist with the natural world.

We need to engage in a new kind of “colonization” – one that uses green flags, not political ones. One that reclaims Earth for nature.

We need to recreate lost habitats, rehabilitate dwindling ecosystems and engage in sustainable practices across every single one of the planet’s longitudes.

Indeed, we need to see home as a universe of native wildflowers waiting to bloom.