

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

*The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*

By J. Drew Lanham

Longwood Gardens Community Read, March-May 2021

If you want to continue to explore the ideas of *The Home Place*, here is a list of resources to fuel your thinking.

The Longwood Gardens Community Read team started thinking about *The Home Place* a few years ago. We have spent a considerable amount of time learning, reading, thinking, and talking as we planned the Community Read for 2021. We found several books, videos, and podcasts that helped us along the way, and we've reviewed a short list of titles related to the three major themes we've focused on in *The Home Place*:

1. The importance of engaging children with plants and nature.
2. The importance of birds in our world and its many ecologies.
3. The experiences (sometimes negative) of people of color when experiencing nature.

We've included books on birding, nature writing by people of color (POC), southern nature memoirs, and a few POC gardeners that we greatly admire. You will find these titles at public libraries, local bookstores, and elsewhere in your community. Please let us know if you find these suggestions interesting and useful. Email us your comments at [library@longwoodgardens.org](mailto:library@longwoodgardens.org)

### **The importance of engaging children with plants and nature**

***I Love Dirt!: 52 Activities to Help You and Your Kids Discover the Wonders of Nature*** by Jennifer Ward. (Roost Books, 2011)

By encouraging children to connect with nature, we provide learning experiences that inspire new generations of scientists, designers, and horticulturists. This book contains creative, free, open-ended ideas to connect children to the natural world through outdoor activities.

***Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*** by Richard Louv (Algonquin Books, 2006)



**Community Read**  
Read. Think. Engage.

Richard Louv is passionate about reconnecting children and nature. This book provides research about the ill effects that 21<sup>st</sup> century living and its inherent “nature-deficit disorder” can have on our children, as well as solutions for families, schools, youth organizations and others to reverse the trend.

**Seed Your Future** resources:

Seed Your Future is the movement to promote horticulture and inspire people to pursue careers working with plants.

- Students can access Seed Your Future’s creative resources here:  
<https://www.seedyourfuture.org/students>

**The importance of birds in our world and its many ecologies.**

**Birds at Longwood Gardens**

Birds play a very important part in Longwood’s ecosystem and we are committed to their stewardship.

- *Conserving the Brilliant Bluebird* blog: <https://longwoodgardens.org/blog/2020-06-03/conserving-brilliant-bluebird>
- eBird: Longwood Gardens bird species count (over 200 bird species have been spotted at Longwood) <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L503790>

***Birds of North America*** with Jason Ward (YouTube series)

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZVnnAt5\\_5lbqaQNNg-LEPwDRbj\\_nf5hU](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZVnnAt5_5lbqaQNNg-LEPwDRbj_nf5hU)

This series is a fun introduction to all things birding. Ward is committed birder of color (since age 14) and science communicator. He infuses the series with a youthful enthusiasm and charm. He introduces the joy of birding through easy lessons (Ward teaches the basics of binoculars in a few minutes, for example) on the culture surrounding birding; and introduces noteworthy birders, including Drew Lanham. Each episode is short (mostly 5-7 minutes). The Community Read team found the series to be quite addictive. Ward makes the topic understandable and approachable. Great resource to use as a conversation starter or easy lesson for a classroom.



**Cornell Lab of Ornithology resources:**

- **Celebrate Urban Birds:** Celebrate Urban Birds is a citizen science project focused on better understanding the value of green spaces for birds. This project connects people of all ages and backgrounds to birds and the natural world through the arts and fun neighborhood activities. They offer mini-grants, youth development opportunities, seasonal challenges, and much more.
- **Merlin App:** Free, instant bird ID help for 6,000+ birds for North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. <http://merlin.allaboutbirds.org>
- **All About Birds:** A free online resource dedicated to information about birds and bird-watching <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>
- **eBird:** eBird is among the world's largest biodiversity-related science projects, with more than 100 million bird sightings contributed each year by eBirders around the world. Birders enter when, where, and how they went birding, and then fill out a checklist of all the birds seen and heard during the outing. <https://ebird.org/home>
- **Science & Nature Activities for Cooped Up Kids** <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/k12/science-nature-activities-for-cooped-up-kids/>
- **Spanish Language** Cornell Lab of Ornithology Resources <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/k12/spanish-language/>
- **Conduct Science Investigations** <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/k12/conducting-investigations/>

**Peterson Field Guides**

Roger Tory Peterson started this classic nature identification series in 1934 with his groundbreaking *A Field Guide to the Birds*. Containing clear illustrations and a novel identification system with arrows pointing out differences in like species, the book and a pair of binoculars could help anyone identify birds. Almost 90 years later, the Peterson Field Guides bring us closer to nature by enabling identification of the flora and fauna around us with clear and precise visuals and descriptions.



**The experiences of people of color when experiencing nature.**

***Black Faces Whites Spaces; Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*** by Carolyn Finney (University of North Carolina Press, 2014)

Why might Drew Lanham and other African Americans feel uncomfortable and unwelcome in America's parks and green spaces? Finney's book will help explore some answers to this question. Finney—scholar, consultant, and activist--draws upon scholarship and popular culture to systematically review the relationship of African Americans and the environment over the last half of the twentieth and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In this book Finney seeks to construct a larger, more inclusive view of the environment while dissecting how race, the American culture, and nature are intertwined. This is a challenging, thought-provoking book that highlights some of the barriers and opportunities presented regarding Drew Lanham's idea to "Get more of people of color 'out there.'"

***Black in the Garden*** (Podcast)

This relative newcomer to the podcast scene (2 seasons) is hosted by self-proclaimed 'Plantpreneur' Colah B. Tawkin. The conversations "happen at the intersection of Black Culture and horticulture in world where all the garden fairies and most of the gnomes are white." The host and the conversation are young and tend to be widely enthusiastic about all things plant-related but does not shy away from discussion of racial issues in horticulture. This podcast gives the Community Read team hope that gardens, plants, and nature continue to attract enthusiastic young supporters, resulting in fresh, relaxed, and fun conversations about gardening and plants. There is plenty to enjoy and learn here.

***Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry*** edited by Camille T. Dungy (University of Georgia Press, 2009)

Editor Camille T. Dungy has compiled 180 poems spanning more than 400 years of African American poetry that offer a "new way of thinking about nature writing and writing by black Americans." This anthology highlights celebrated voices as well as newer artists, presenting them in thematic groupings accompanied by her own insightful essays. Unlike most anthologies, this is one that can be read in its entirety, like a novel, but will also be dipped into again and again for its wise reminder that African Americans have been writing about nature for hundreds of years.



***The Colors of Nature; Culture, Identity, and the Natural World*** edited by Alison H. Deming and Lauret E. Savoy (Milkweed Editions, 2011)

Editors Lauret Savoy and Alison Deming collected writings that expand a frame of reference for nature writing beyond the usual Euro-American perspective. We highly recommend it. For the Community Read team this book opened a whole new appreciation for a broader array of POC writers on gardens, plants, and nature. There are several writers included in that book that the Community Read team continues to follow, read, and learn from (including Lauret Savoy's own penetrating and personal exploration of race and landscape, *Trace*). The essays are all relatively short (5-10 pages) and cover a wide array of topics and cultural perspectives. This is an interesting book to dip into here and there or read cover to cover.

***Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm's Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land*** by Leah Penniman; foreword by Karen Washington (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2018)

*Farming While Black* is devoted to guiding (and inspiring) new POC farmers as an act of social good. Food deserts exist for communities of color across America. Penniman became determined to contribute to a better path forward. When she and others created Soul Fire Farm their goal was first grow much needed fresh vegetables and fruit and then help to introduce and educate. The lessons learned from those efforts (and struggles) are the genesis of this book. From that hard work comes this how-to guide for every step, informed by knowledge gained through experience. The love and commitment come through on every page along with practical advice and plenty of resources for help along the way.

***Half My World: The Garden of Anne Spencer, A History and Guide*** by Rebecca T. Frischkorn and Reuben M. Rainey (Warwick House Publishing, 2003)

Anne Spencer (1901-1975) was a Harlem Renaissance poet, librarian, and educator from Lynchburg, Virginia. Much like Drew Lanham, in her childhood she "sought solitude in woods and fields near her home, collecting wildflowers, listening to the calls of birds, or just sitting on the riverbank alone with her memories and dreams" (p. 12). She and her husband created a lush and thoughtfully designed garden together at their home, which served as creative inspiration for her poetry. She did much of her writing in a tiny cottage office in the garden. This lovely book is filled with details of Spencer's life and family, descriptions and photos of her garden (now restored), and examples of her powerful poetry.



**Interview with Rue Mapp**, Founder of Outdoor Afro (Podcast episode)

<https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/the-heinz-endowments/we-can-be/e/64934826>

Outdoor Afro has become the nation's leading, cutting edge network that celebrates and inspires Black connections and leadership in nature. "We help people take better care of themselves, our communities, and our planet!" Outdoor Afro is a national non-profit organization with leadership networks around the country.

***In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World*** by Judith A. Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff (University of California Press, 2009)

This book shines a light on the food plants that African slaves in the Americas grew for their own sustenance. Many of those plants originally came from Africa, and the skills to grow them were carried by the people transported in the slave ships. The authors demonstrate the importance of African plants and African people in the development of the botanical legacy of the Atlantic area, a story that is not often told.

***A Man Named Pearl*** (Docurama Films, 2008)

American topiary artist Pearl Fryar's motto is "Love, Peace, and Goodwill." He has transformed his yard in Bishopville, South Carolina into an astounding and whimsical topiary garden. When he first moved into the all-white neighborhood, he was told that "black people don't keep up their yards." This was all the motivation he needed to create his award-winning topiary masterpiece.

***Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape*** by Lauret Edith Savoy (Counterpoint Press, 2016)

*Trace* is a powerful and personal exploration of the American landscape through the lens of Lauret Savoy's point of view. As a scholar she explores the beautiful as well as painful episodes, especially for African Americans and Native Americans. To Savoy the American landscape is more than trees, mountains, and valleys. It is rich in meanings accumulated over time through human activity, personal memory, history, and spirit. In Savoy's highly readable prose, she takes the reader on journeys across America. And, with all journeys of discovery, one experiences that joy is in the discovery of how the past informs the present. This



book is a thought-provoking and original work of nonfiction. The Community Read team highly recommends it.

***Working the Roots: Over 400 years of Traditional African-American Healing*** by Michele E. Lee (Wadastick Publishers, 2014)

In *The Home Place*, author Drew Lanham writes that his grandmother Mamatha had a use – medicinal or culinary – for almost every plant growing outside her door. She employed “an array of concocted potions, herbal remedies, and incantations to treat illness as readily as anyone else would use over-the-counter drugs” (p. 41). *Working the Roots* gives insight into where some of those remedies may have originated. The author interviewed over 20 southern African-American traditional healers about their knowledge and practice. The book is divided into two parts: fascinating first-person narratives, and a reference guide to the plants and their traditional treatments.

**Other Recommended Resources**

***Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*** by Janisse Ray (Milkweed Editions, 1999)

Janisse Ray grew up on a junkyard in rural southern Georgia: “It’s flat, monotonous, used-up, hotter than hell in summer and cold enough in winter that orange trees won’t grow....unless you look close, there’s little majesty.” Despite the lack of obvious beauty in her surroundings, Ray is tied to the land and proud of her upbringing. In her beautiful memoir, she parallels her personal story with the story of the lost longleaf pine forests of the South. Drew Lanham acknowledges Ray as an early supporter of his writing, and her work as an influence on his.

***H is for Hawk*** by Helen MacDonal (Jonathan Cape, 2014)

This emotional memoir by writer, illustrator, and naturalist Helen MacDonal chronicles her attempt to counteract grief over her father’s death by training a goshawk (a vicious predator bird). An experienced falconer, she followed the advice of eccentric author T.H. White’s book *The Goshawk* in her training.



***Lab Girl*** by Hope Jahren (Alfred A. Knopf, 2016)

Like *The Home Place*, Hope Jahren's funny, heartbreaking, and encouraging memoir *Lab Girl* chronicles the path of a scientist who is also seen as a bit of a "rare bird" in their field. A geobiologist who studies trees, flowers, seeds and soil, Jahren's path to becoming a scientist was rarely easy, but her passion for nature and science was always clear. *Lab Girl* was the Longwood Gardens 2018 Community Read title. Community Read toolkit and discussion guide for *Lab Girl*: <https://longwoodgardens.org/community-read-toolkit-2018>

***A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*** by Aldo Leopold (Oxford University Press, 1949)

This cornerstone of conservation and land stewardship ideals was Longwood's first Community Read title in 2014. Leopold's model of a Land Ethic is as relevant today as it was 70 years ago: "When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." Drew Lanham writes that *A Sand County Almanac* became sacred to him and was a catalyst for his life's work. Lanham served on the Board of Directors of the Leopold Foundation from 2012-2018. Community Read toolkit and discussion guide for *A Sand County Almanac*: <https://longwoodgardens.org/community-read-toolkit-2014>

