

Finding ways to appreciate all of nature's treasures

by Ginny Gregory

My Isaac Michael loves sticks. He collects them, stacks them, builds with them and cuts them for kindling. He never met a stick that didn't call his name. This all started when he was about two years old or so. He and his dad would go for walks and along the way the collecting would begin. He would take great effort making piles of them.

As time has gone on his love for nature has expanded to rocks, acorns, pine cones. . . just all of nature's gifts he really sees as special treasures. Needless to say, I have encouraged him to keep his collections out on the deck (not inside). That idea has worked somewhat, but random piles appear throughout the house . . . even on the sink counter where he brushes his teeth. You never know when the need to admire a collection might hit you.

Recently I was working with a friend helping her clean up a space for visiting friends. There were just so many things that I know Isaac would love, but I really had to say to myself *enough*. Just as I was having this internal conversation, a hanging piece with 15 cubby holes (6"x 6" each) came up for grabs. My friend was saying, "You know your Isaac would just love this." She was right and I



In the Garden

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finally conceded that yes, he would love it and promptly loaded the wooden cubby furniture piece into my car.

The next week when I went to pick up my grandson Isaac at school, he spied it in the back of my car. "What is that exactly?" he said. I responded softly that I was not really sure, but perhaps he might like it. He was thrilled. When we arrived home, we both decided that it could be his collection depository. I hung it under the porch light to the left of the door. Now each day when he arrives home from school he leaves his treasures in one of the cubbies. When I find a treasure for him, I leave it there for him to find. I dream that over time he will fill it to the brim with all of the wondrous things he collects.

Perhaps each year we'll relocate the treasures and he can start over. I know that with each year he will find new and exciting things in his outside travels. I am so tickled that he

has such a love for nature.

Recently, Isaac was with me over an overnight and after many games etc. we got on our coats and gloves and armed with clippers we were off to collect kindling. He will do anything to keep the wood stove flaming. The lure of fire reduces him to jelly as he stares into it simply mesmerized.

If we allow ourselves, each of us will start to see the random pieces of art all throughout nature. If you are still you can hear it call to you . . . to enjoy or to just collect. My sister recently fell victim to the seed/cones of the glossy leaf magnolia. Those seed/cones are brutal under foot, but by bringing them home she found them to be remarkable.

After the red seeds have dropped out, the sections of the cone start to expand. Design-wise, it is one of the most unique pieces of nature I have ever seen. So rather than curse them, my sister made a shrine on her table with them. It allowed her to relish their marvelous beauty. She is an artist of profound talent. She turned an act of foul play into a playful act of admiration. Dearest sister, show me the way.

Ginny Gregory is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. She is the owner and creative energy behind Beyond The Pail...Creating Gardens and Beyond www.beyondthepail.net

JOY

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they can develop their spiritual skills without outside intervention or dependence upon clergy. Suzanne's story is one of these situations. Many of us find that we can develop our own skills and find joy in our ordinary daily lives. Communicating with nature is a good start. There are many wonderful spiritual books being written now as well as gorgeous spiritual music available to us. We can use modern technology to access such information for ourselves. A word of caution, however. Modern life, facebooking, ipading and twittering may envelop us and deaden our minds to spiritual inspiration and joy. Take a break from buying and wrapping Christmas presents and reach out to some of the beautiful and inspiring sources of joy in the world around us. I've written about heart-based living. Turn off the brain for a few minutes to find peace and joy in your heart this holiday season. Find happiness knowing that the problems of modern life are temporary. You will find joy in the here and now and in the afterlife. My wish for all of you: Have a wonderful Christmas, New Year and Everlasting Life.

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YOGA

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Yoga postures using diaphragmatic breathing relieve stress by stimulating a relaxation response from the parasympathetic nervous system. This relaxation helps reduce cortisol levels and hypertension, a contributor to heart and kidney disease and stroke. Yoga postures also build tremendous strength, balance and concentration. Since falling is the greatest hazard to seniors over 65, yoga helps guard against falls by strengthening the legs, core and back with no fancy gym equipment.

My students' positive bone scan results and my research inspired me to write about

yoga and how it can help reverse osteoporosis and strengthen an aging body. I've created a sequence of 12 accessible poses that almost anyone can do. The title of my book is: *The Dynamic Dozen: 12 Accessible Poses for Building Bone Density, Balance and Strength*. Consistent, gentle yoga practice of these 12 weight-bearing, gravity-resisting, stress-relieving poses can help senior citizens live stronger, more independent lives.

The Dynamic Dozen: 12 Accessible Poses for Building Bone Density, Balance and Strength is available at McIntyre's in Ferrington, Flyleaf Books in Chapel Hill and on Amazon.com.

Tim Keim, a Chatham resident, is a yoga teacher, writer and environmentalist.

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