

**Shrubby Beardtongue** (*Penstemon fruticosus*) also referred to as **Shrubby Penstemon**

a bushy plant, usually much broader than tall, with large, showy, pale lavender or pale blue-violet, bilaterally symmetrical flowers in crowded, narrow clusters at stem ends

a tenement complex, a city outgrowing itself a broad lavender conversation with the tongue of unbuttered bread

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**Origami Poetry Project™**

**The Restlessness of the Gardener**

Martin Willitts Jr. © 2016

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## The Restlessness of the Gardener

Plants from the Lewis & Clark Expedition



**Martin Willitts Jr.**

**Texas Bluebonnet** (*Lupinus texensis*)  
The "flowering pea of the plains of Arkansas"  
in the Monticello oval flower bed in April 1807,  
one seed was saved by Jefferson's granddaughter, Anne Randolph  
Jefferson alleged it was "remarkable for its beautiful blossom & leaf,"  
yet later relegated it to his South Orchard  
the identity of this flowering pea is still a puzzle  
traditionally, Monticello gardeners have interpreted "Lewis' pea" as highly ornamental  
if that one seed could speak, what would it say?  
*we are transplanted dreams  
the rain on dry grass  
the wash of paintbrushes whispering the sunrise  
the night and the restlessness of the gardener  
seeking the compelling blend of surprise  
even if for a moment*

**Cat's Ears** (*Calochortus elegans*)  
or, **Elegant Mariposa Lily**

a diminutive plant with slender, bent stems and a few sparse white flowers in a branched cluster shorter than the single grass-like leaf resembling a cat's ears  
I scratch my field notes  
curiosity has caught my tongue  
the mousy-day is held by its tail  
in my teeth  
ears twitching  
satisfied

**Canyon Gooseberry** (*Ribes menziescii*)

we found these in the open forest, violet-white, their leaves tend to be smaller, less resinous or sticky

the stems have three spines per node; often the fruits are covered with glandular hairs and/or spines

unremarkable for their edibility, jewel-like flowers in early spring particularly lovely at close range

their maroon eyes study us  
the redwood forest moves in closer  
dwarfing us, making us as small as the berry

**Thimbleberry** (*Rubus periviviflorus*)

a small flowered bramble brar scrambling showy white flowers resistant to and generally enhanced by fire  
the bark was boiled made into soap,  
leaves were used to make a medicinal tea  
young shoots may be eaten as greens  
so small,  
so fiery  
just a thimble

**Cardinal flower** (*Lobelia cardinalis*)

hummingbirds feast on this perennial display of red flowers in eight inch spikes

each flower has three lower petals and two upper petals like staircases of red spilled ink

Cardinals in Rome wear red shoes and whisper in the Pope's ear with hummingbird tongues