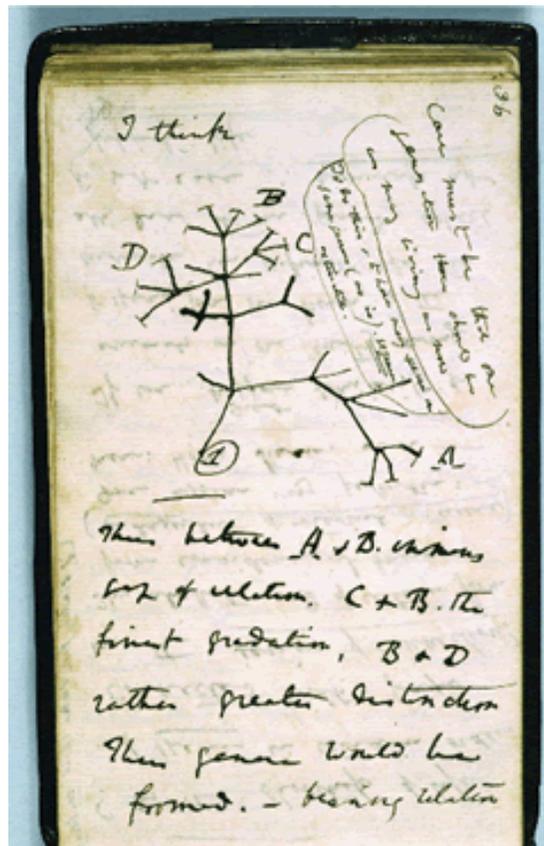


TREE OF LIFE - MEDITATIVE GARDENS PROJECT PROPOSAL

Narrative Concepts:

Returning from his trip on the H.M.S. Beagle in 1836, Darwin's sketchbook from 1837-8 dedicated his thoughts to the transmutation and origins of species. This sketch from a page is now known as the *Tree of Life*.

http://www.age-of-the-sage.org/evolution/charles_darwin/tree-of-life-sketch_1837.html



The affinities of all the beings of the same class have sometimes been represented by a great tree...As buds give rise by growth to fresh buds, and these if vigorous, branch out and overtop on all sides many a feebler branch, so by generation I believe it has been with the great Tree of Life, which fills with its dead and broken branches the crust of the earth, and covers the surface with its ever branching and beautiful ramifications.
—Charles Darwin 1859

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The text reads:

...led to comprehend true affinities...heredity, & mind heredity, whole metaphysics, it would lead to closest examination of hybridity & generation, causes of change in order to know what we have come from & to what we tend, to what circumstances favour crossing & what prevents it, this and direct examination of direct passages of structure in species, might lead to laws of change, which would then be main object of study, to guide our speculations...

A *Tree of Life* garden and an accompanying art program as one of the components would have both healing and contemplative value in community settings. *Tree of Life* symbolism has a long history, crossing many cultures. While it would be overwhelming to explain its significance to each culture, the *Tree of Life* has **overarching themes and meanings that span across many peoples.**

A symbol of connection to all things:

The tree has roots that reach deeply into the soil, acknowledging its connection to, and accepting nourishment from, Mother Earth. Leaves and branches extend into the sky, acknowledging Father Sun and accepting the energy that it transforms into nourishment. Over time, **they become quite unique and beautiful in their eccentricity and idiosyncrasies.** They are just as we all wish to become – shaped into **fascinating, intriguing individuals** who have weathered hardships and broad experiences in life that have made us into who we are.

The tree of life means that you are not an island:

But rather are deeply connected to the world around you and dependent on it for your ability to grow and thrive. Their branches may **break and grow back** in different directions or the very soil beneath them will erode – causing them to grow even stronger roots to hold on.

A symbol of family and connection to your ancestors:

A tree symbolizes the generations of your family – a tree sprouts from a seed, grows and branches out, sees how far it can go and then creates a new fruit that gives life to the next generation – to begin anew. The *Tree of Life* also symbolizes family through its intricate network of branches, showing our **continuity through all generations**. We are connected by ever-expanding branches to our parents and grandparents and to our children and our children's children.

As a symbol of rebirth:

In the fall, trees lose their leaves and enter a **hibernation** for a few months. But come spring, the tree sprouts tiny buds, bursts forth with dramatic blooms and leaves and is **reborn again**. In this way, the *Tree of Life* is a symbol of a fresh start on life, **positive energy, good health and a bright future**.

The Celtic word for *oak* is *daur*, the origin of the modern word door. Thus, the root of the word signifies a **doorway**. These trees – also known as wishing trees, fairy trees or May bushes – are places where **people tie ribbons to ask for blessings** from *saints, spirits and fairies*. To this day, one can pass through Irish country and find trees decorated with ribbons.

This history, told in new media methodologies, can serve as a Project Component. In addition, a nearby box of pre-cut ribbons can be placed appropriately so that one is able to make a wish, say a prayer or silent meditation for good health and well-being for themselves, loved ones or the future of the earth. Healing herbs will be planted and identified throughout the Garden while a *Walking the Tree of Life Labyrinth* will serve as a journey of contemplation and spiritual growth as one ruminates on health issues and the healing powers within us all.

A widely-promoted Opening Celebration will include a formal, ribbon-cutting opportunity that will be publicized in traditional and social/new media channels as well as to a member-wide E-Blast and newsletter articles. A well-designed, ongoing program of educational and community-based events will be created for multi-generational constituencies – children, parents, grandparents, etc., and feature baby trees as giveaways. In addition, other events would be conceived to coordinate with the appropriate observances i.e., Arbor and Earth Days and so on.

Our practice and desire – most especially as it relates to the land – is to transform the *sense of*

place landscape tradition of the 19th-century's search for the sublime into living and breathing, immersive environments that engage and integrate – where the viewer becomes more than a mere observant but rather an active participant. In these gardens of nature, we conceptualize a safe place – where one can contemplate and be one with the sights, sounds and fragrance of nature, navigate the Labyrinth as a symbol of one's life journey and the path to wellness.



<http://tolweb.org/tree/>