

phytoturgies

an open-source score for vegetal propinquity

This is a linger, a practice of sensitivity and proximity,
a set of ways to notice and to be near.

Move with care, watching for uneven ground,
poison ivy, low branches, and other hazards.

i. arrive & situate

Consider arrivals: How did you get here — today and in the big picture? Who arrived before you, and how, and why?

Where are you? Who are this place's Indigenous stewards, and what are its histories — colonial, industrial, agricultural, and ecological?

We stand in the middle of layered histories and futures,
in cycles of growth and decay, inhabiting them.

You are invited to dwell in the dissolve, a gradual disarticulation,
the meeting with and as eventual plant life.

ii. perambulate

Find a route that moves through the landscape's hierarchies — from maintained spaces to neglected ones, central spaces to marginal ones, or vice versa. Walk slowly, pause often.

If possible, walk with someone who knows the plants intimately. Listen as they speak about what grows here: the origins of the plants, their habits and personalities, their vulnerabilities and resiliencies, the ways they've arrived and persisted, what they offer and what they need.

Let these observations surface as fragments — half-thoughts, tactile descriptions, speculations, memories. Which specific plants call for attention? Do you know their names? Can you describe their textures, smells, seasonal changes, ways of moving? Share what you don't know. Allow for silence.

iii. open linger

You are welcome to sit, kneel, lie down, stand, eat, drink, seek shade, gather with others. Try any of the following in any order, or make up your own.

Allow multiple timescales to flood your vision.

Slow your breath until your body matches the pace of the air around you.

Notice what you are already touching and what is already touching you.

Shift your sense of middle, again, again, again...

Initiate a duet with another plant body, notice other duets, trios, quartets, quintets... you are already a part of.

Let attention grow from your edges.
Become coextensive with other edges.

Follow paths proposed by plants.

If you notice something, share it: guide someone's attention through gesture, describe or physically frame what you notice.

iv. give and gather

Gather seeds, fruits, or cuttings from plants that are abundant. Take only what can be spared. If you're unsure, take less.

exhale fully

cover bare soil

arrange debris for habitats

untangle restrictive vines

extend limbs to meet

shake gently

twist from stem

cut to stimulate growth

leave 90%

v. plant

Collect soil.

Shake your head or rub your hands together vigorously over collected soil, shedding hair and dead skin cells.

Fill a small pot with soil.

Send your pointer finger into the soil to make room for the seed (not too deep).

Drop the seed into the finger-sized hole.

Gently cover the seed to keep it safe.

Find out what the seed needs.

Tend it.

Let it be a reminder of the place you visited, the plants you met, and the time you spent becoming with.

This score is free to adapt to your site, your community, your climate, your plants. Some suggestions:

Research your site's history — Indigenous presence, land use, ecological change.

Consult with local ecologists, gardeners, or other sources of knowledge about which plants to engage with and how.

Shift your practice to different times of day or times of year. What appears? What disappears?

Learn about each plant. What does each need? What can you offer? Propagating has different requirements and isn't appropriate for every plant.

This score grows through use.

We welcome documentation of your adaptations at phytoturgies@gmail.com.