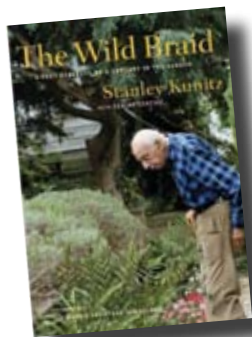


served on the dot of 11:30 a.m., and was followed by coffee and homemade plum brandy. After a short rest he resumed work out of doors, observing changes in the sky as reflected in the nearby river or, in later years, by the pool in his garden; alternatively he would paint in his studio. The bell for dinner would ring at 7 p.m., and bedtime, like Monet's hour of rising, was early, at 9:30 p.m."

Giverny was not a garden for display or recreation. It was a laboratory where the artist observed in minute detail the ever-changing effects of light. When Monet began painting there, he perceived the shifting atmosphere in half-hour intervals. By the end of his life, he detected visual scene changes in mere minutes. He felt he had to race to keep up with the sun in order "to ensnare the light, and throw it onto the canvas."

Like all gardeners, Monet was seduced by the garden's cruel promise of perfection. "I am chasing a dream," he wrote. "I want the unattainable. Other artists paint a bridge, a house, a boat; and that's the end. They've finished. I want to paint the air which surrounds the bridge, the house, the boat; the beauty of the air in which these objects are located; and that is nothing short of impossible." Like all gardeners, he lamented, "If only I could satisfy myself with what is possible!"



Final Words

For Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Stanley Kunitz, it was his garden that drew him forward when he suffered a near-fatal health crisis in his late 90s. "Clear my schedule," he told his assistant. "All I want to do is write poems and be in the garden."

The Wild Braid celebrates Kunitz's century in the garden, from the wild woods where he would escape from his gloomy childhood to the sloping seaside garden he created years later in Provincetown, MA. Throughout the journey, Kunitz is fascinated by the natural world and by language, and he forges out of the two a lifelong passion. He explained, "I find the combination of the gardening and the long nighttime hours at my desk to be just the right medicine for my soul."

The Mother's Guide to Self-Renewal

The Mother's Day Gift That Will Keep on Giving

Story by Sara Scott

IN THE JANUARY ISSUE OF *austinwoman*, career coach Renee Trudeau revealed what she feels is the key to life fulfillment when she said, "Self-knowledge is the ultimate compass. It guides you more than any other single resource. Our personality, experience and skills matter, but only to the extent that they help us know who we are and what fuels us."

Now, with the release of her book, *The Mother's Guide to Self-Renewal: How to Reclaim, Rejuvenate and Re-Balance Your Life*, Trudeau aims to help readers find that self-awareness and use it to re-shape their lives in a truly satisfying way.

The book is structured into monthly themes such as "Motherhood and Identity," "Saying No and Asking for Help," and "Unleashing Your Creativity," and includes exercises like guided journaling. Trudeau's own first-person anecdotes make *The Mother's Guide* easily relatable. Reading through the pages feels like you're hearing stories from an insightful friend who is saying, "This is what happened to me, and this, when I figured out what to do about it."

Trudeau's book is just part of a larger movement she has started to bring

mothers together to balance their lives. The book is filled with testimonials from moms who have joined Personal Renewal Groups - life-coaching groups that follow the principles Trudeau shares in *The Mother's Guide*. On Trudeau's website, you can find a group to join or sign up to be trained to lead your own group.

In honor of the nationwide release of the book, which coincides with Mother's Day, moms, daughters, grandmas and friends are invited to celebrate with an Evening of Self-Renewal on Wednesday, May 9th at Mercury Hall. Ticket price includes a signed copy of the book, food and wine. Singer/songwriter Sara Hickman will be performing music from her latest CD *Motherlode*. A portion of the proceeds from the evening will benefit the Girls Empowerment Network of Austin.

The Mother's Guide to Self-Renewal will be available for purchase at BookPeople, BookWoman and at Trudeau's website beginning May 9th. ★

Reclaim, Rejuvenate, Re-Balance: An Evening of Self-Renewal for Mothers
 May 9th, 6:30 - 9:30 p.m., Mercury Hall
 Tickets: \$30 in advance, \$35 at the door
 For launch tickets or to purchase a book, visit: www.reneetrudeau.com

In this volume of conversations and poems and photographs, the garden prompts the poet's meditations on life, death and poetry. He speaks eloquently about the longing we have to be in our gardens and the real and imaginative ways we manage to remain there. He elaborates on the affinities between poetry and gardening: "I conceived of the garden as a poem in stanzas." He pulls no punches about the reminders of mortality that face us daily in the garden. "We are all candidates for composting."

It only makes sense that it is a poet who reveals the kind of artistic devotion that the garden requires and reciprocates. So, to the poet belong the final words: "I associate the garden with the whole experience of be-

ing alive, and so, there is nothing in the range of human experience that is separate from what the garden can signify in its eagerness and its insistence, and in its driving energy to live - to grow, to bear fruit."

To hear more about these and other garden books that will inspire and improve your life, join us on May 24th at 7 p.m. at BookWoman for the second in the BookWisdom series. ★

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