

# **galt. publication**

**issue 05: seeds**

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**“Architecture is the play of light and shadow,  
scale and proportion, materials and textures.”**

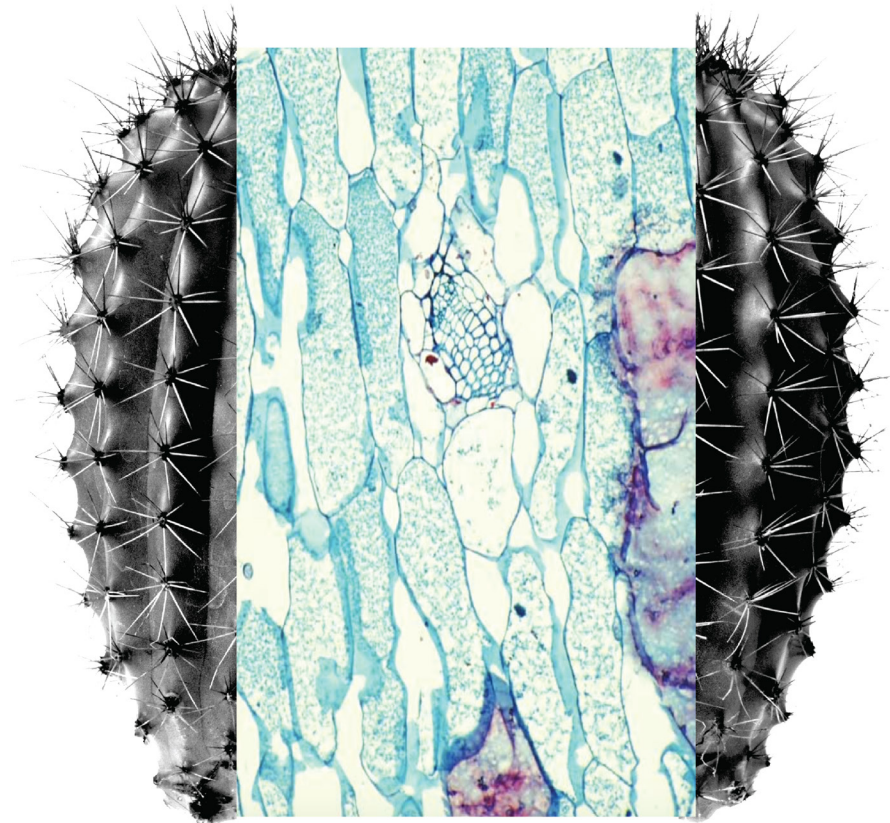
—Lisa Heschong, *Thermal Delight In Architecture*





**Liquid light dances upon  
earth, a watery oasis visible  
distance. Some believe it as  
others see the mirage.**

**scorched  
in the  
truth,**



*It all began with the circulatory system of a Cactus, for some, a shrine of mystery. The first look at the spiny plant typically growing perpendicular to sandy soils uses deception as a formula for survival.*

In the expansive desert, the landscape stretches boundlessly. Here the presumed scarcity of water defines existence, an environment seemingly bereft of life. Yet, amidst the arid terrain, the livelihood of the desert respires, flowing through ephemeral rivulets and hidden oases. There is prosperity within the parched wilds that some view as desolate.

Zooming out, to the macro ecological scale, the desert unveils its ingenious adaptations. Dry riverbeds, or wadis, etch serpentine paths, indicating the sporadic yet potent forces of waters during rare downpours. These torrents sculpt the land, shaping its topography, and nurturing life in the most unexpected ways.

The Cactus may seem to be a barbed, stone-like relic rooted in parched land, yet behind this facade opens up to an intricate system of sodden storage, brimming with the flows of sugars, waters, and histories. The cortical bundles, a unique system specific to the Cactus, act as the vascular system for the plant and transport a rich liquid medium through its interior network, ultimately replenishing the waters lost in the dry desert air.

Having the ability to live for hundreds of years, pathways of Cacti veins are used to disseminate nutrients; they collapse and are re-grown, due to the changing climate. If these thoroughfares wither, alternative ways of movement are created around previous routes. No matter the weather, the Cactus persists—laying more dormant in periods of drought and flourishing in those of higher precipitation. Externally, their dust-dogged appendages and a sharp-witted nature alludes to a hostile entity. But in actuality, their delicate soft innards hold vestiges of past waters.

These vegetative bodies act as vessels holding memories of meteorological occurrences.

*Was it a wet year, perhaps a drought?*

It is through their archival nature that we can begin to recall the changing seasons. Their flesh becomes a catalog through the shriveled veins or nourished arteries, telling botanists stories of the thunderstorm in spring or the dry spell in the thick of summer. The sandy soil erodes foundations, with shallow roots the Cactus stays nested to the surface—frequently with slight repositions to appease the shapeshifting landscape. Although not boisterous in structure, they find ways to prosper in fierce weather and hold space for sustenance, allowing other bodies to thrive.

Perhaps in certain ways, we should be more like the Cactus.

# Festival, Scaffoldings, and Assembly

The fisherfolks' liveliest cultural events demand meticulous planning from community members. In the past, the celebration lasted several days, with many rituals performed. Although the process has now been simplified, it still relies heavily on community members to come together and complete these tasks.

The deity celebrations are based at the local humble temple in the area, with a facade upgrade for the host temple to emphasize the upcoming festivities. Temporary bamboo structures would be erected at the temple where the celebration is hosted to accommodate the momentarily increased population. An additional structure, usually big enough to accommodate a couple hundred people, is the provisional theatre built to host performances for the gods.<sup>5</sup> The bamboo structures are all done by specialized local builders and are not exclusive to the fishing community. However, these temporary structures are especially crucial to the fishing community for their temporary expansion on land, claiming certain communal areas of the land dwellers, blurring the boundary of land and water.

Each village group in the area creates their own offerings to ask for blessings from the gods. On the main day of the event, a parade with dragon and lion dances is thrown for the deity. The festival's participants temporarily occupy the main streets, congregating in public areas to witness the celebration, and then march towards the temple for the deity's blessing.<sup>6</sup> While some may view this festival entirely as a religious practice, it is also an opportunity for outsiders to observe the fisherfolk community. These are rare but cherished circumstances for the members of the community to socialize and connect with each other, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and values on land. These moments of connection have become increasingly crucial due to the dwindling of the fisherfolk's culture.



Figure 5: The Tam Kung Festival parade starts at the local playground, which is temporarily transformed into a community theatre to house various Chinese Opera performances for the festival.

5. Yin-mo Tse, Xiao Kou, and Sze-man Poon, *Scaffolding, Viewing, Assembling: Cultural Observations on Bamboo Scaffolding, Chinese Opera and Markets* 棚·觀·集：關於竹棚、戲曲及市集文化的探索 (Hong Kong: D'Art Research Unit 藝述研究社, 2010), <https://books.google.ca/books?id=-13jpZwEACAAJ>, 69.
6. Lui Wing Sing 呂永昇, *Fu Sheng She Hui: Li Shi Shang d Shui Shang Ren Yu Xianggang Zao Qi Yu Ye* 浮生社會：歷史上的水上人與香港早期漁業 [Floating Society: Historic Fisherfolk Community and Early Fishing Practices] (Hong Kong: The Conservancy Association Centre for Heritage, 2019), 94-96.



## 141 under|storey

mixed-use redevelopment. The pivot towards mixed-use more adequately—and appropriately—responds to the demands of the larger urban population by providing housing and communal amenities. The mixed-use scenarios produce greater opportunities for socialization and housing, unlike the private and exclusive environments created by luxury loft conversions. The commodification of real-estate for the privileged few withholds essential opportunities for city building, whereas mixed-use transformations leverage the site by upgrading or building new assets for the church congregation, residents, and public alike. The adaptation of churches towards mixed-use is more socially, environmentally, and economically favourable for urban inhabitants over the private alternative.

# We must vouch for this future as public servants and shapers of the built environment.

6. Eric Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life* (New York: Crown, 2018), 10.
7. Kendra Fry, *No Space for Community: The Value of Faith Buildings and the Effect of Their Loss in Ontario* (Toronto: Faith & the Common Good, 2020), 1, [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/faithcommongood/pages/838/attachments/original/1594847267/No\\_Space\\_for\\_Community-compressed.pdf?1594847267](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/faithcommongood/pages/838/attachments/original/1594847267/No_Space_for_Community-compressed.pdf?1594847267).
8. Sally Stone, *UnDoing Buildings: Adaptive Reuse and Cultural Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 32.

Churches, like libraries, schools, and even coffee shops, are broadly labelled as ‘social infrastructure’ because they embody “the physical conditions that determine whether social capital develops.”<sup>6</sup> In the report, *No Space for Community: The Value of Faith Buildings and the Effect of Their Loss in Ontario*, author Kendra Fry observes that most people use faith buildings for non-religious reasons—such as cultural, recreational, or social—due to their convenient location, accessibility, and affordability.<sup>7</sup> These qualities

prove churches to be crucial community assets, especially for local organizations that need community space and operate with limited resources and income. It would be beneficial to prolong these community-oriented qualities and carry forward their historical social-cultural underpinnings as places of gathering and care; as adaptation calls for adherence to both “the agenda of the new

users [and] the intentions of the original building,”<sup>8</sup> revitalization as continued social infrastructure is appropriate.

Fortunately, organizations such as Trinity Centres Foundation (TCF) and Kindred Works are already stewarding older churches into mixed-use community hubs with church denominations like the United Church of Canada. How can the other churches in decline be convinced to adapt to a future where renewed social opportunities are possible through their existing physical location and form?

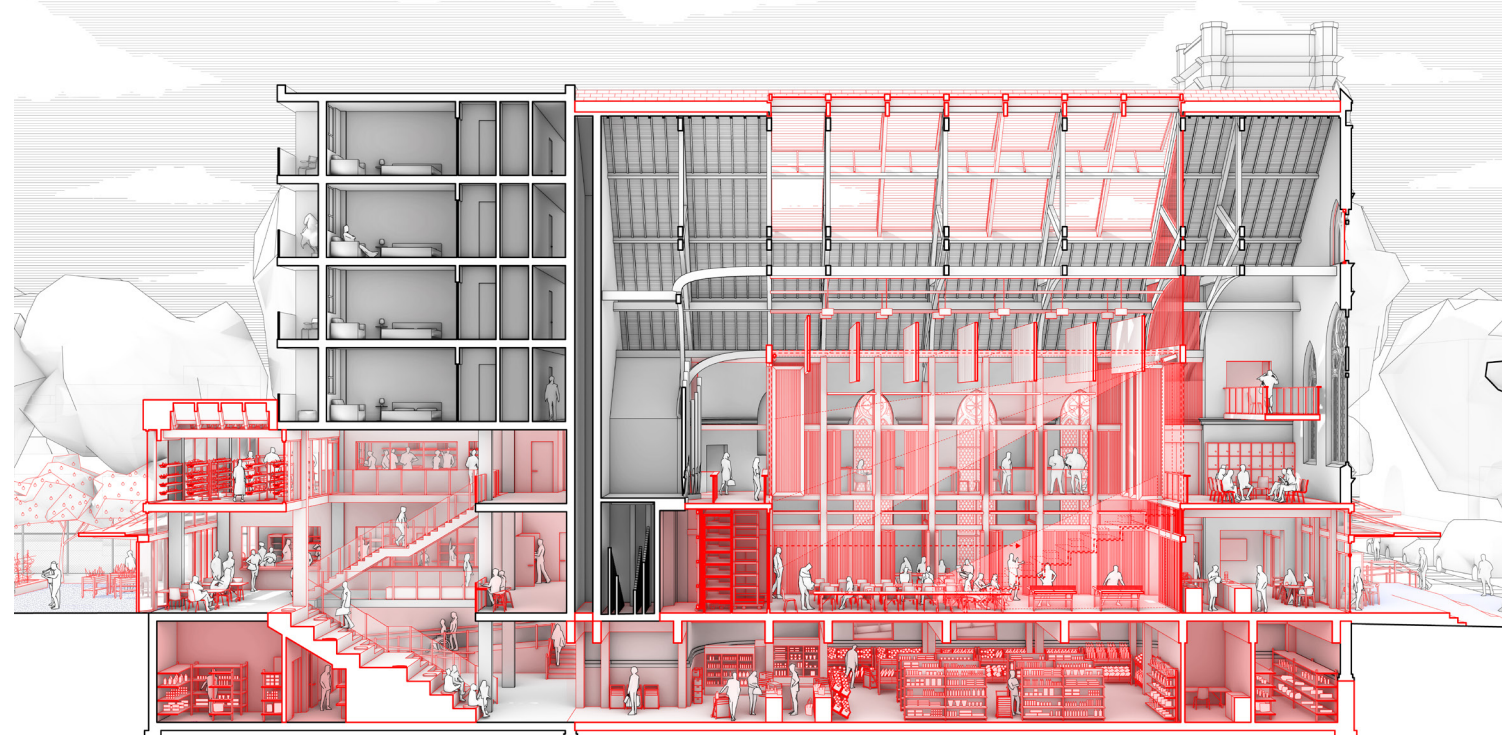
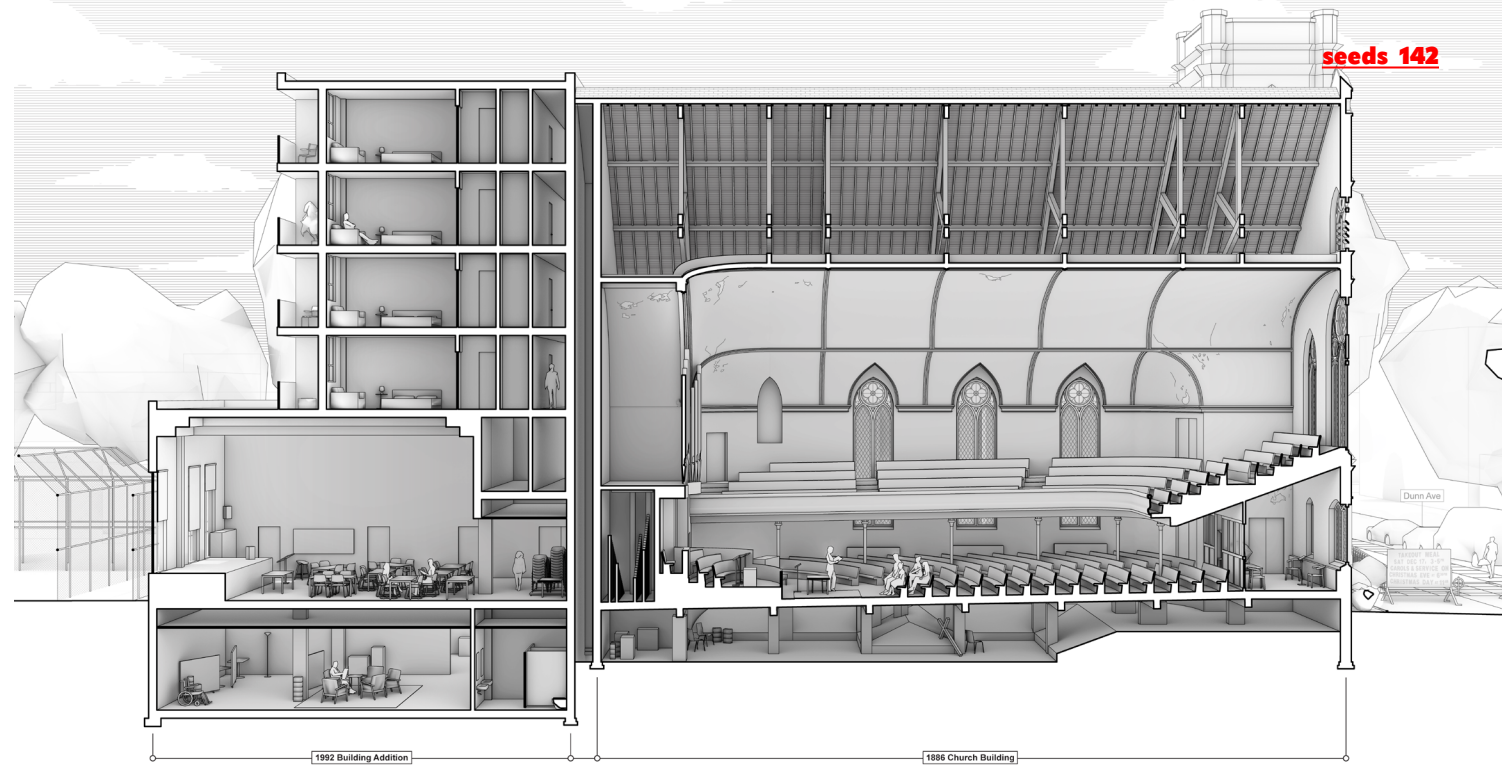


Figure 5 (above): Longitudinal section of the existing BPPC/BPP building.

Figure 6 (below): Longitudinal section of the revitalized building; the large multipurpose space depicts a largely-opened configuration of adaptable components in a casual community scenario.





Figure 2: Instead of planning for the afterlife of architecture, the general consensus points towards demolition and rebuilding, or at the very best, reconstruction.



**241 radicle** The ambition behind the desk was to create a universal table that could be used as a small dining table, a coffee table, or (most likely) a desk. Most of the design efforts were focused on the legs. If the legs were made to be adjustable, it would allow the tabletop to be changeable. The adaptable legs could support a larger or smaller surface depending on the user’s needs. Furthermore, the modular nature of the design would encourage easy repairs and upgrades to the table. The height of the table adjusts using a leg system that raises and lowers; the legs are comprised of two mirrored “U” shaped bends connected by two vertical elements. These vertical elements allow the desk to raise and lower from 650mm to 850mm. A third leg is attached to the lower portion of the system, creating a tripod that improves lateral stability. The tripod leg can be installed on the inward or outward side of the main leg. The goal was for the tabletop to freely rest upon the two tripod leg systems without the need for permanent fastening. However, in the final prototype, threaded inserts secured the tripods to the table with one stretcher connected to them. While the final design favours the desk configuration, its modular design creates a versatile product able to serve future uses.

02 desk

**Carbon Facts**

Item: Desk

Weight (kg) 22.92 kg

Emissions / kg 0.42 CO<sub>2e</sub>/kg

Total Emissions 46.06 kgCO<sub>2e</sub>

Inc. Carbon Storage 9.61 kgCO<sub>2e</sub>

% Yearly Value\* 0.20%

Production 15.920 kgCO<sub>2e</sub>

Transportation 7.277 kgCO<sub>2e</sub>

End-of-life 22.858 kgCO<sub>2e</sub>

Operation (Yearly) 0.000 kgCO<sub>2e</sub>

Carbon Storage -36.443 kgCO<sub>2e</sub>

**Lifespan Facts**

Lifespan Goal 75 years

Cost / Year 2.678 \$/yr

Adaptability Good

Maintainability Excellent

Reliability Fair

Rcycable Parts Excellent

Biodegradable Parts Excellent

**Certifications**

Sustainable Forestry ✓

Fair Trade ✓

Safe Workplace ✓

**Ingredients**

Ash Wood, Steel, PVA Glue



nities and individuals. Our actions in one place can have repercussions worldwide, highlighting the interconnectedness of our planet's systems. We're also confronted with challenges such as misinformation and conspiracy theories which influence public perception and hinder effective response efforts. This is where storytelling becomes essential. Artists, with our ability to convey narratives and evoke emotions, play a crucial role in raising awareness and reminding people of ongoing environmental issues.

**galt.: How have you found storytelling effective in addressing both the personal and global dimensions of this issue?**

CB: Your insights are making me realize how my practice has evolved over time. Initially, my work had a broader voice, but now it feels much more personal, with my own voice being present in the film, through voiceover, or through the personal stories I share. What's also fascinating to me is how others tell their stories within my projects. For example, a project I've been working on, *Connecting Through Grasses*, involves participants receiving grass seeds native to the prairies. They're prompted to think about where they'll plant these seeds for a couple of weeks before actually planting them. The prompts focus on finding suitable locations where the seeds can thrive, prompting participants to consider factors like light and water availability.

Interestingly, many participants share stories about the chosen locations, often revealing personal connections to these places. This spontaneous storytelling wasn't initially part of the project but has become a meaningful aspect. It was a way for participants to communicate with me and with each other, creating a collective narrative woven into the project. I discovered that this exchange of stories prompted people to reflect on their relationships with the land and led to greater care and stewardship for the future.

**galt.: I'm curious about how the ecological and social landscapes of Canada have influenced or have inflicted upon your artwork and practice. How have these landscapes influenced the development of your practice?**

CB: I love that you used the word "inflict" here because it is quite accurate in describing the way the Canadian landscape has affected my work. I grew up in Edmonton surrounded by family. Later, I moved to Denver, Colorado, on the other side of the Rocky Mountains. The landscape reminded me of Edmonton, of home, and I found comfort in its familiarity. Despite having lived away from Alberta for two decades, most of my work, particularly involving capturing landscapes through film, was centered around my visits home. Being there, once again surrounded by family, surrounded by the landscape I was so familiar with, triggered something in me and made me turn my camera on.

These visits made me acutely aware of the impact of the local environment on my work: I was in a region with a government that denies climate change while being a significant contributor to it. This hypocritical reality heavily influenced my artistic direction and fueled my desire to address climate change more explicitly in my work. Returning to Alberta has also deepened my connection to the land and has allowed me to acknowledge its importance in shaping me. Where you are, your relationship to that place and its landscape really changes the way you communicate your ideas about the world right?

**galt.: Absolutely. And I didn't realize this before but, in recent years, I've become more aware of the profound connection that Indigenous communities have with the land we live on,**

particularly in the suburban GTA. Initially, I associated my environment with sterility, viewing it as repetitive, with cookie-cutter houses and numerous parking lots and strip malls.

However, as I began learning more and engaging with the Mississaugas of the Credit River, I discovered the richness of my surrounding ecology and its historical significance in the GTA. This newfound understanding transformed how I perceive rivers like the Don River and the Credit River, instilling in me a deeper sense of gratitude. Have you had a similar experience?

CB: I have so much to learn, especially regarding Indigenous teachings and perspectives about the land, which have so often been deliberately suppressed. I am very lucky to live in a neighborhood with strong Indigenous communities actively engaged in reclaiming and sharing this knowledge.

Your mention of the river resonates with me deeply. The river dividing the city of Edmonton into North and South has become a focal point of learning, reflection, and empowerment for our community. I never truly appreciated the significance of the river until recently. Understanding how rivers shape and transform landscapes over time has taught me about complex environmental issues, much like seeds do. Rivers serve as powerful metaphors for navigating these complexities and fostering deeper understanding.

**galt.: I'm curious if you have any stories about preparing for or responding to plant invasions that you'd like to share. Is there a particular project or initiative that excites you or informs your future work?**

CB: With my seed-saving project, I collect seeds from plants grown in my garden. This includes seeds that pique my interest or those I have an abundance of due to prolific seed production by certain plants. So, there

are a couple of ideas I've been pondering this year, which may illustrate some concepts I'm considering when it comes to seeds. Much of what I grow in my garden revolves around food, divided into categories like edible crops, flowers, herbs, and other ornamental plants.

The food crops I cultivate often prompt deep reflection on food security. It's important to note that while a garden may not entirely sustain someone and their family, it's still valuable to consider what grows and what does not every year, especially in light of shifting weather patterns due to climate change. For instance, both parsnips and carrots are biennial plants, typically harvested for their roots. Normally, I'd uproot and consume the root without allowing the plants to flower and produce seeds. But to encourage seed production, they need a second year to grow, during which they derive energy to produce seeds. I've attempted to let my carrots go to seed for several years, but they struggle to survive the winter, which is particularly challenging in this region.

Parsnips present a similar challenge. For a couple of years, I experimented with an unconventional method. I removed the roots and stored them in the garage, hoping that the slightly warmer conditions and sand would aid their survival. This approach didn't make much of a difference. However, this year, I stumbled upon a parsnip plant unexpectedly growing in an unplanned area of my garden. Initially unsure of its identity, I allowed it to grow unchecked, and gave it some time to develop before identifying it. To my surprise, it turned out to be a parsnip plant. This particular parsnip likely originated from seeds I planted three or four years ago, surviving multiple winters before resuming its growth and beginning to produce seeds.





The conclusion of this journey was as ephemeral as the life of the plant that had traveled across oceans to be grown on, to be coaxed out of an unknown soil. Some friends and I celebrated with a small feast in August of that year, and I cannot describe how good the Molokhia was, or how special that day was. It was a beautiful thing to witness these leaves grow over time and come back full circle as I harvested their seeds in the late fall, for next season.



# Gn-nu. There's a rhythm to Gn. Nu. "Don't worry. Be It will come."



1 That phrase belongs to a language that is slowly disappearing—a creole dialect of Armenian, Arabic, and Turkish that has grown for hundreds of years in the coastal mountain villages of Northern Syria. I heard it often from my grandfather, especially in the garden: “Don’t worry. Be patient. It will grow.” Those reassuring syllables traveled here to the cold Canadian suburbs of Cambridge, Ontario, alongside stories of a “homeland” that I have never seen.

2 “Yallah Zaven, it’s the time!” my grandmother yelled from the porch. My grandfather and I were sitting silently in the shade of the cherry tree after a morning of work in the garden. “Okay Zaven. Let’s go see my friend Gourgen,” my grandfather said, getting up.

...

Gourgen is one of the three men from “back home” who my grandfather meets regularly for coffee. He is a strongly-built farmer with a slow, thoughtful voice and a degree in agricultural science. I’ve seen him a handful of times in my grandparents garden but had never been to his home. Last week he invited us for coffee and to pick up heirloom tomato plants that he had grown from seeds over the winter.

# it. patient.

