Saturday, July 29, 2017

Apprenticeship graduate Aaron de Long’s talk at the Saturday morning “Fog Lift” in the Alan Chadwick Garden
Part of the UCSC Farm & Garden’s 50th Anniversary “First 50” Celebration

On Becoming a True Apprentice

Let the world be your Master
Let the violets and stones
The glittering frost and bubbling spring
Your chickens and your children
Teach you how
You will not need to know anything
The answers you seek you will receive in each moment
On sunbeams and wind
In coincidence and chance

Learn to listen
With your bones and blood, your fingers and heart, your eyeballs and tongue
And the language you were not taught
But in which you are written
Will become palpable and clear
Everything becomes a teacher
Bumblebees and peonies
Racing clouds and garden snails
Crabapples and crap

Learn to recognize the inextricable link
Between yourself and everything that runs
Round you and through you
And the limitless potential of the world
Will be your own
Your wealth will be inexhaustible
A treasury of constellations and thunderbolts
Firefly flotillas rising from hayfields at dusk
Dewdrop crystals hung on spider web threads

Trees don’t read books
So learn to read trees, instead
Become fluent in roses
Memorize the radicle emergence of seeds
Hum the tunes to which the bees dance
Recognize your own nature in the fog that up from the sea
Up to the heavens
Up through the trees
Apprentice like this and, in time, people may begin to ask you, aloud, the same, endless questions you have been asking in silence, for years. They may even offer to pay you to be professionally talkative.

And you, instead of telling them to do this or that, instead of forcing them to learn names and procedures. Will help them, instead, to discover secrets. Will expose them, instead, to this incredible “thing” which is, itself, the teacher.

It is, you see—though many people seem to find the idea amusing—the garden that makes the gardener.

By Aaron de Long, with the following notes:
--The final six lines are a paraphrase of an Alan Chadwick quote
--Also, there are two separate quotes from Orin Martin, within the body of this piece