RE-ENCHANTMENT & GRATITUDE DAY

THE FORGOTTEN ONES: LICHEN



Honoring the art of making life together.

WILD NATURE HEART • OCTOBER 2026

A Blessing for Lichen Kin

Blessed be the Lichen Ones,

ancient weavers of unlikely kinships,
slow artisans of stone and bark,
little communities dressed in green, gold,
gray, and orange.



We honor your patient becoming,
your astonishing collaborations,
your ability to make a home where almost nothing else can.

You remind us that no one becomes themselves alone.
That partnership is an ancient art.
That belonging need not mean being alike.

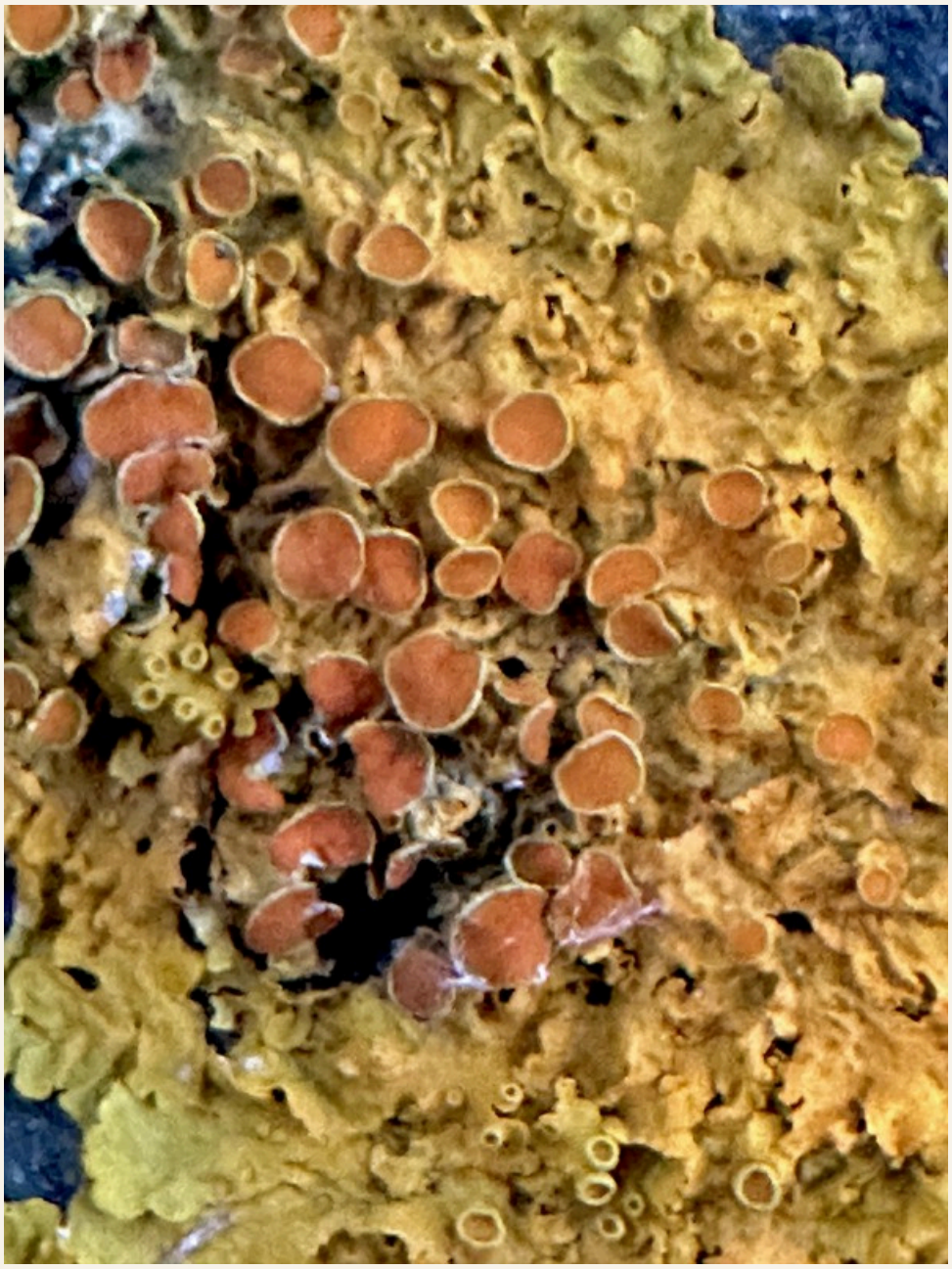
You teach us to slow beyond the clocks of Empire,
to grow without hurry,
to make kin across differences.

May we linger to honor the worlds beneath our notice,
never mistaking smallness for insignificance
nor stillness for doing nothing.

May we remember that cooperation is not weakness,
that intimacy is a form of resilience,
that the world is held together
by countless quiet alliances.

Blessed Lichen Ones, thank you.





SUNBURST LICHEN
(Xanthoria parietina)

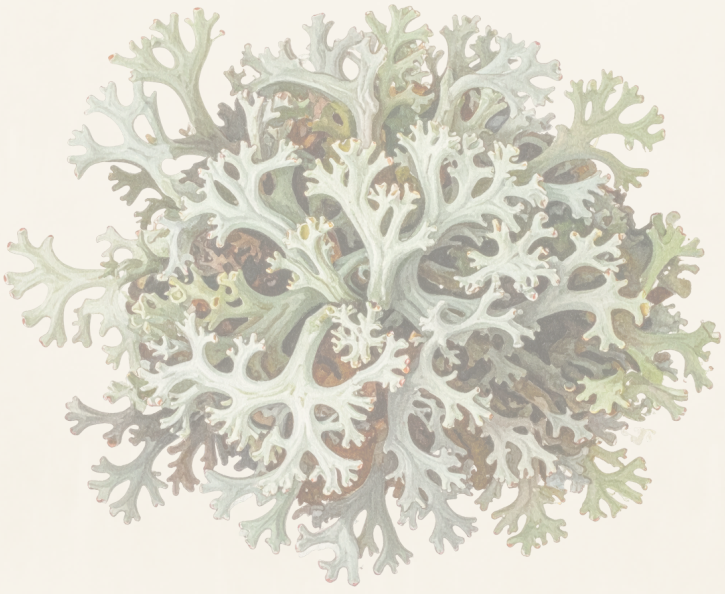
The world was never made of individuals.

MEET THE LICHEN PEOPLE

Leafy Ones. Crusty Ones.
Powdery Ones.
Trumpet-bearing, rock-hugging,
rain-drinking ones.

A few members of the vast
and wonderfully peculiar lichen
community, growing their
improbable lives all around us.

Come closer.
Meet some of your neighbors.



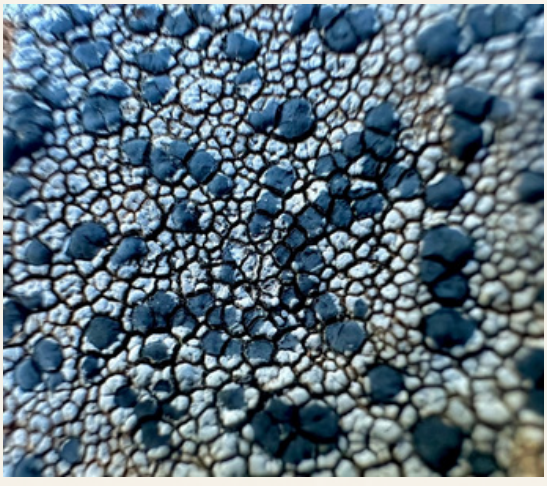
THE CRUSTOSE ONES













THE LEAFY ONES

LUNGWORTS





PELT LICHENS







“Lichen are living riddles, confusing our concepts of individual and identity…”
~Merlin Sheldrake, Entangled Life

THE BUSHY ONES (FRUTICOSE)



BROWN-EYED WOLF LICHEN
(Letharia columbiana)

THE BUSHY & BEARDED ONES (FRUTICOSE)













THE CUPS AND TRUMPETS

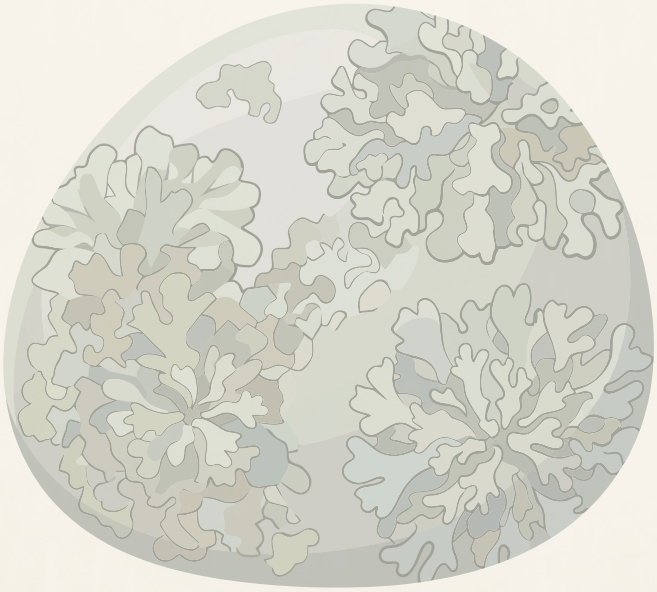








"The thought of two things that come together
and alter each other collaboratively—
two things becoming one thing
that does not age—
roused me toward considering lichen
a kind of model and metaphor
for the intricacies of intimacy."
—F.G.



THE TUBES & BONES



SEASIDE BONE LICHEN
(Hypogymnia heterophylla)

THE TUBES & BONES









THE DUSTIES





Pacific dust lichen loves redwoods





FANCY FROST LICHEN
(*Physconia*)

French poet Antoine Émaz suggests poetry itself is lichen.

POEM

What Do You Hear When You Listen to Lichen Grow?

Under the spell
of a turbulent creek in a mountain cave
you listen to lichen grow

Under the smell of a whipping winter rain
you listen to a landscape's
green resurrection

Enchanted, you become velvety like moss

patient like stone
beflowed like water

and suddenly remember
that you are in fact

a songbird
a spiderweb
a sprouting buckeye

wild like worms
in the hill beside/inside you
navigating the flood

What do you hear
when you listen to lichen grow?

—Ryan Van Lenning, from *Don't Forget the Smalls in Your Basket of Whos*

POEM

Words in This Forest

**There are words in this forest
older than your grandfather**

**older than the grandmother tree
on his farm**

**Words even older than the soil
holding her up**

**since before
she was a seed**

**They're entangled together here
forming silent songs**

**called root and flow
called change and be
called here and now.**

You can't pronounce them with your tongue.

—Ryan Van Lenning, in *From Inside These Wild Ones*



ENLICHENMENT

Lichen—So diverse, so ancient, so hearty, so vibrant.

And they're everywhere! Lichens cover about 7% of the planet's surface and have a long record in soils possibly dating back 400-600 million years.

Elder Lichen confounds many of our received ideas about identity and kingdoms. They resist commodification, grow extraordinarily slowly, and can live so long that we may never witness their natural deaths. There may be lessons of adaptability and cooperation worth tuning into.

Lichens are remarkable symbiotic associations, typically involving fungi and photosynthetic algae or cyanobacteria, alongside communities of other microorganisms. *They're emergent beings.*

And really isn't everything completely an emergent symbiosis of multiple organisms and qualities, including humans?

"Lichen are living riddles, confusing our concepts of individual and identity..."*, as Merlin Sheldrake says in *Entangled Life.

For example, "we" are as much or more non-human cells (bacteria, viruses, fungi, etc.) than human cells, blurring the supposed distinction between self and non-Self?

Maybe we can become Enlichened and rethink our identities. Our ecological selves are deeper and more interesting than the notions we inherited from Modernity: a rational self, located in the head, severed from our bodies and much of the rest of the animate world.

ENLICHENMENT

I have been meeting so many new lichen in my neck of the woods, once I started paying/playing attention. Pacific dust lichen, ubiquitous usnea, wolf lichen, intricate bone and cup lichen, bright orange xanthoria. Most recently, it is a beautiful large and leafy epiphytic (meaning grows on the surface of another plant in a non-parasitic way), lichen called lungwort (*Lobaria pulmonaria*).

I have been experimenting with medicinal (e.g. usnea tincture and tea) and natural dye applications of some lichen (e.g. lungwort on wool; see photo next page), but my primary orientation is simply of noticing and wonder.

We are in an era of decaying forms of Modernity's violent edifices. Perhaps it's the case that we won't receive a next season guest pass on Earth (as humans anyway), until and unless we begin to open our ears and hearts more fully to the wisdom and presence of the more-than-human world.

Like Fungi and Water, Lichens complicate our inherited categories, and suggest different ways of being in the world. After all, they have called earth home for many hundreds of millions of years before humans arrived.

At the very least they can invite these lessons, suggested by Laurie Palmer:

Bow down. Wait. Open. Refuse. Collectivize.

Perhaps by becoming as still as a stone to hear what secrets lichens spill out from deep time, we might emerge intimately shapeshifted.



Wool cloth tie-dyed with Lobaria pulmonaria

INVITATIONS TO ENLICHENMENT

Apprentice to a Lichen:
Find a lichen nearby, ideally one you have passed many times. Sit with it for 10–15 minutes. Notice form, color, texture, and its relationships with other beings. Return after rain if possible.

A Walk (or Crawl) Among the Forgotten:
Walk slowly with the question, *Who or what has been living beyond the edges of my attention?* Let the lichen guide a larger practice of noticing.

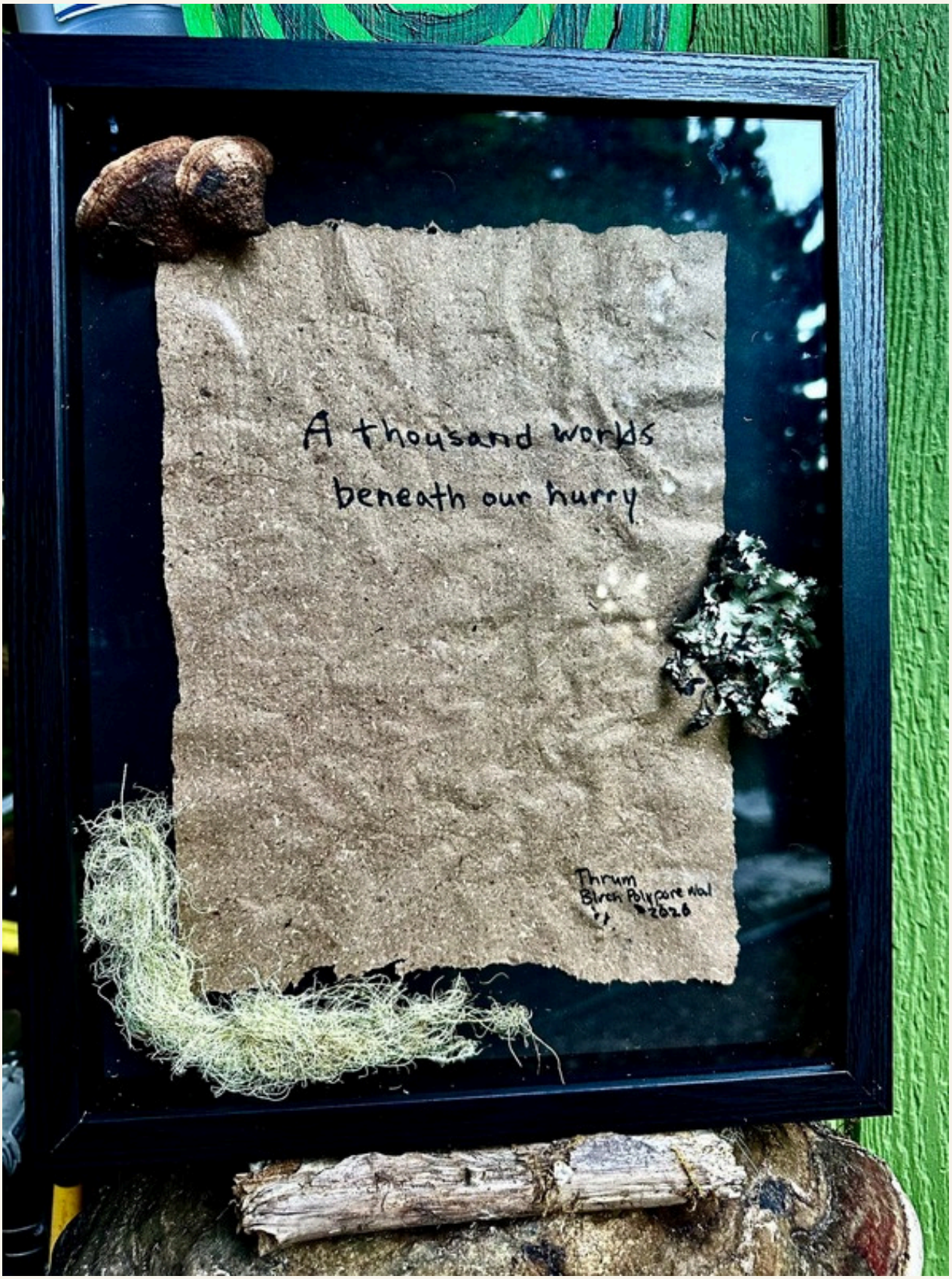
A Symbiosis Inventory:
Reflect on the human and more-than-human relationships that make your own life possible.

What unnoticed alliances hold your life together? Where might you practice more reciprocity?

FURTHER LICHENING

Some lichen love for your library:

- Chapter 3, Intimacy of Strangers, in Merlin Sheldrake's *Entangled Life*
- *The Lichen Museum*, by Laurie Palmer (Catch the beautiful conversation with Kamea Chayne on the Green Dreamer podcast)
- 5 Tips for Living Like Lichen, Laurie Palmer, Orion Magazine
- Lichen and Life After Capitalism, with Kerry Knudsen on For the Wild podcast
- California Lichen Society



Mushroom paper made with birch polypore, accompanied by bracket mushroom and two types of lichen

MORE WAYS TO MAKE LIFE TOGETHER

If you feel called to slow down to notice things a little longer, these Wild Nature Heart spaces & creations flow from the same forest floors and living waters, where we continue practicing relationship with the living world and our next aligned turn.

A few places to continue:

—**Lichen & Liberation**: A gathering in symbiosis and solidarity. Coming soon in two forms: an in-person, on-the-land gathering in Humboldt County and a 2-hour online gathering. Interested? Email *programs@wildnatureheart.com* for details and updates.

—**Earth Intimacies:** A 6-week interactive course devoted to reinhabiting the animate web of life. We deepen ecospiritual intimacy by tending sacred relationships with the more-than-human world—Water, Moon, Lichen, Mycelium, feathered kin, soundscapes, emergence, and more. Begins November 5

—New earth poetry collections available now: *Becoming Beautiful Barbarians*, *Riverever*, and *Watershed*.



A Year of Enchantment

Wild Nature Heart • Re-Enchantment Day



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