

Ode to what is not yet.
Arbor Day, East Park in Bremerton, tree city, USA

Sarah Steinke

I couldn't say who or what
inspired in this who such
extravagance to invest in
what they would not see
come to fullness; something like
love, maybe thirst, for music and
planted silver birch for the
finest xylophone keys, or
hungered for sweet and
planted serviceberry, knowing in
8yrs a stranger might drip
syrup from these berries onto
his tongue and weep, of what
desire for beauty and
birdsong caused this
someone (let's say grandmother) to
plant a dogwood, she planted
Japanese privet, she planted
witch hazel, for in 6yrs this tree
might open its bright hand, the
sun in winter, or maybe as she
riveted wartime industry, she heard a
sigh decades into the future for
want of breath, and planted
red oak, hornbeam, hemlock,
Norway maple, red maple so that
children she'll never meet for
sheer joy could fling
maple seeds into the air, and
watch helicopters spin
wonderment, rooted like the oak—
large to hold the earth in a
sturdy rain, small to fit inside a
squirrel's pouch.

Longer ago still
she planted Pacific Madrone, pine,
strength in Douglas fir, nobility in
Cedar, each with a note—*I love you.*
I love you. I love you.

We plant love

Someone long ago
planted a seed
that grew into a
tree. When the wind
blows, the leaves
say *I love you.*