



DENVER CENTER  
FOR THE  
PERFORMING ARTS  
Theatre Company

# INSIDE OUT

A STUDY GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS



# NATIVE GARDENS SYNOPSIS

Gardeners, cultures and generations clash, turning friendly neighbors into feuding enemies. Latino couple Pablo and Tania purchase a house next door to long-time residents and white couple Virginia and Frank. Pablo is a lawyer with ambitions of becoming partner while Tania is a doctoral candidate and very pregnant. Virginia is an executive with a large defense contractor in Washington DC, while Frank, retired, pours his energies into his elegant English-style garden. But a disagreement over a long-standing fence and property line soon escalates into an all-out war of taste, class, privilege and ecology, as both couples pursue their version of the American Dream.



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### **NATIVE GARDENS**

By **Karen Zacarías**

Directed by **Lisa Portes**

Producing Partner  
**Margot & Allan Frank**  
**Robert & Judi Newman**

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**APR 6 - MAY 6**  
SPACE THEATRE

# PLAYWRIGHT KAREN ZACARÍAS

"I was at a dinner party where someone bought up an altercation that had happened with a neighbor, and other people started bringing up their neighbor stories, and what struck me about them was both the passion and absurdity around these stories, that they got big very quickly and contentious, and how everyone regretted that it had gotten like that."

— Karen Zacarías

Karen Zacarías's award-winning plays include *The Book Club Play*, *Legacy of Light*, *Destiny of Desire*, *Mariela in the Desert*, *The Sons of Sor Juana*, *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accent*, and *Just Like Us* (based on the book by Helen Thorpe) which premiered at the Denver Center Theatre Company. Her musicals with composer Debbie Wicks la Puma include *Jane of the Jungle*, *Einstein is a Dummy*, *Cinderella Eats Rice and Beans*, *Looking for Roberto Clemente*, *Ferdinand the Bull*, and *Frida Libre*. Her musical *Chasing George Washington* premiered at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and went on a national tour. Her script was then adapted into a book by Scholastic Press with a foreword by First Lady Michelle Obama.

Karen is currently adapting Edith Wharton's novel *The Age of Innocence* for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and *Oliverio: a Brazilian Twist on Dickens'*

*Oliver Twist* for the Kennedy Center. She is working on commissions for Arena Stage, Cincinnati Playhouse, Ford's Theatre, Adventure Theatre and First Stage.

Her plays have been produced at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Arena Stage, The Goodman Theatre, The Denver Center Theatre Company, South Coast Rep, Cleveland Playhouse, Walnut Street Theatre and many more. Her awards include New Voices Award, 2010 Steinberg Citation Best New Play, Paul Aneillo Award, New Voices Award, National Latino Play Award, Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding New Play, and Finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize.

Karen is the first playwright-in-residence at Arena Stage in Washington DC, and has taught playwriting at Georgetown University. She is the founder of Young Playwrights' Arts Theatre, an award-winning theatre company that teaches playwriting in the Washington, DC public schools and which won a National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award in 2010.

Born in Mexico, Karen now lives in Washington DC with her husband and three children.

<http://www.karenzacarias.com/html>

## NATIVE GARDENING

Native plants are adapted to the local climate and soil conditions where they naturally occur. These important plant species provide nectar, pollen, and seeds that serve as food for native butterflies, insects, birds, squirrels and other animals. Unlike native plants, common horticultural (decorative or introduced) plants do not provide energetic rewards for their visitors and often require insect pest control to survive.

Native plants are also advantageous, because:

- Native plants do not require fertilizers and require fewer pesticides than lawns.
- Native plants require less water than lawns and help prevent erosion. The deep root systems of many native plants increase the soil's capacity to store water. Native plants can significantly reduce water runoff and, consequently, flooding.
- Native plants help reduce air pollution. Native plantscapes do not require mowing.
- Excessive carbon from the burning of fossil fuels contributes to global warming. Native plants sequester, or remove, carbon from the air.
- Native plants provide shelter and food for wildlife.
- Native plants promote biodiversity and stewardship of our natural heritage.
- Native plants are beautiful and increase scenic values!



# BIODIVERSITY

“Native plants feed the right bees and bugs, the right bugs feed the birds, and so on. We, the Individual Gardeners of America, have the opportunity, or dare I say, the responsibility (to help) ensure biodiversity in our gardens. We can help save the planet.”

— Tania, *Native Gardens*

The term “biodiversity”, short for biological diversity, is a blanket term that refers to all life on planet Earth, or in a particular location: plant, animal, marine, freshwater, fungi, microbial, human, all the vertebrates and invertebrates, and even microscopic life forms. The abundance or absence of all of these factors can help determine the health of a local ecology, and by extension, the health of the planet. In most areas of the world, unique ecosystems have developed in every area, based on climate, temperature, latitude, season cycles, ocean, river and

lake habitat, and other variables.

The plants, animals, birds, insects and other life forms that have developed in specific locations since the last Ice Age, are native to specific areas, and in most cases form an interdependent web of plants, birds, animals and insects.

A healthy ecosystem is one where the land supports and provides food for a wide variety of birds, mammals, plants and insects (and people!), and has a healthy natural cycle that supports the pollination. The rise of the Industrial Revolution, technology, air pollution, growing population, loss of habitat and other human activities, all have drastically changed the natural ecology and biodiversity of many areas, affecting among other things, pollination and the creatures that pollinate, activities of central importance to among other things the growing of food crops.

# THE AMERICAN DREAM

The American Dream is the belief that anyone, regardless of their origins or class status, can attain success through hard work.

The idea of the American Dream can be traced to the Declaration of Independence, which states: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness”.

These rights are promised both to the native-born and the immigrant.

The American Dream promises freedom and equality; it offers the freedom to aspire to bigger and better things and the possibility of achieving them.

<http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2015/044-what-is-the-american-dream>

[http://www.investopedia.com/terms/American\[-dream.asp](http://www.investopedia.com/terms/American[-dream.asp)

# SENIOR PARTNER

In law firms, partners are primarily those senior lawyers who are responsible for generating the firm’s revenue. Many law firms have a “two-tiered” partnership structure, in which some partners are designated as “salaried partners” or “non-equity” partners, and are allowed to use the “partner” title but do not share in profits. This position is often given to lawyers on track to become equity partners so that they can more easily generate business; it is typically a probationary status for associates. A typical equity partner could be compensated three times as much as a non-equity partner billing at the same hourly rate.

Partner compensation varies considerably. A 2012 survey found that law firm partners’ average annual

compensation was \$681,000 (\$896,000 for equity partners, \$335,000 for non-equity partners) and tended to go up based on number of years in the partnership:

- 5 or fewer years: \$399,000
- 6-10 years: \$633,000
- 11-20 years: \$790,000
- 20+ years: \$926,000

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partner\(business\\_rank\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partner(business_rank))

# ADVERSE POSSESSION (SQUATTING)

Under certain circumstances, a trespasser or squatter can come onto one's land, occupy it and gain legal ownership of it. The legal term for this is "adverse possession." Through these means, a trespasser can gain ownership of just a few feet of property or hundreds of acres. And the trespasser doesn't need to intend to take the land by "Squatter's Rights". Sometimes it happens through an honest mistake — for example, a neighbor may have relied upon a faulty property description in a

deed when building a fence on what he believed to be his property.

In addition, a resident who puts up a fence more than two feet over his neighbor's property line is trespassing, as is one whose garage has been on your property for several years.

<http://www.nono.com/legal-encyclopedia/adverse-possession-trespassers-become-owners-469e4.html>

<http://growingleaders.com/blog/seven-emotions-follow-sense-entitlement>

**CLASSISM** Internalized superiority is the acceptance and justification of class privilege by middle-class and wealthy people. Class privilege include the many tangible or intangible unearned advantages of "higher" class status, such as personal contacts with employers, "legacy admissions" to higher education, inherited money, good childhood health care, quality education, speaking with the same dialect and accent as people with institutional power, and having knowledge of how the systems of power operate.

<http://www.classism.org/about-class/what-is-classism/>

**RACISM** Racism is prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior.

**AGEISM** Ageism is the stereotyping of and discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age. The term was coined in 1969 by Robert Neil Butler to describe discrimination against seniors, and modeled on sexism and racism. Butler defined "ageism" as a combination of three connected elements: prejudicial attitudes towards older people, old age, and the aging process; discriminatory practices against older people; and institutional practices and policies that perpetuate stereotypes about elderly people.

# GARDENING COMPETITIONS

Gardening competitions and awards abound across the U.S. and much of the world. Organizations like the National Garden Club, the American Horticultural Society, National Garden Clubs, Inc., the Garden Club of America, Men's Garden Clubs of America, and the many regional clubs of Garden Clubs of America, are just a few organizations that promote research, education, information and support for amateur and professional gardeners, to offer an opportunity for school-aged children to learn about gardening, and to promote and encourage friendly gardening competition in local and regional communities, whether in vegetables, flowers, trees, landscaping, ecological concerns and so forth. Other similar organizations support and encourage the development of community and

school gardens. Botanic gardens are important and popular resources for learning about plants and gardening, and competition among flower growers can be fierce. Most horticultural and gardening societies grant awards and citations not only for skill and dedication in creating beautiful private and public gardens, but also to exceptional individuals, organizations or institutions that have made significant contributions to their communities in such areas as environmental and civic responsibility, climate awareness, indigenous gardening practices, conservation, and community beautification through gardening projects. Such awards honor deserving recipients who educate and inspire others in communities coast-to-coast.

# “GOOD FENCES MAKE GOOD NEIGHBOURS”: ROBERT FROST’S “MENDING WALL”

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,  
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;  
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.  
The work of hunters is another thing:  
I have come after them and made repair  
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,  
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,  
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,  
No one has seen them made or heard them made,  
But at spring mending-time we find them there.  
I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;  
And on a day we meet to walk the line  
And set the wall between us once again.  
We keep the wall between us as we go.  
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.  
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls  
We have to use a spell to make them balance:  
“Stay where you are until our backs are turned!”  
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.  
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,  
One on a side. It comes to little more:  
There where it is we do not need the wall:  
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.  
My apple trees will never get across  
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.  
He only says, **“Good fences make good neighbours.”**

Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder  
If I could put a notion in his head:  
“Why do they make good neighbours? Isn't it  
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.  
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out,  
And to whom I was like to give offence.  
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That wants it down.” I could say “Elves” to him,  
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather  
He said it for himself. I see him there  
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top  
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.  
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,  
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.  
He will not go behind his father's saying,  
And he likes having thought of it so well  
He says again, **“Good fences make good neighbours.”**

*One of the most celebrated poets in America, Robert Frost (1874-1963) was a four-time Pulitzer prize-winning New England poet who wrote on universal themes. He used every-day language and often wrote about life in rural America. In his poem Mending Wall, the narrator, a New England farmer, meets his neighbor in the spring to rebuild the stone wall between the two farms. As they work, the narrator questions the purpose of the wall. He describes how hunters in the neighborhood destroy sections of the wall in their frenzy to let their dogs kill a rabbit. The work also examines how mankind “makes boundaries and breaks boundaries”, Frost joking that his apple trees aren't going to cross over and eat his neighbors pine cones. As the two men walk the different sides of the wall, the narrator notes how the neighbor seems to walk in darkness (the shade of the trees), implying ignorance and/or inhospitable sentiments.*

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mending-Wall>

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Pre-Performance Questions

1. What does the term “American Dream” mean to you? Has the American Dream changed from generation to generation or is it still the same today for each generation? Is there a difference in “Dreams” between someone born in the United States and someone who is coming to the United States? Why or why not is the “American Dream” possible to achieve?
2. What is the difference between a neighbor and a friend?
3. What are our expectations of and responsibilities to our neighbors? How do these expectations and responsibilities change based on if it is us who are moving into the neighborhood or if it is someone else that is moving in?

## Post-Performance Questions

1. How do the scenic elements of set design, costuming, lighting, and sound help tell the story? Which are the most effective and why?
2. In what ways does the play’s title hold multiple meanings?
3. In what ways do the short transitions between the scenes help inform your understanding of the play and its central characters?
4. How does the play support the quote: “The difference between a flower and a weed is a judgement?”
5. How would you describe the two couples; Tania and Pablo Del Valle and Virginia and Frank Butley? What are their similarities and differences?
6. What assumptions do the new neighbors make about each other? In what ways are these assumptions challenged and/or confirmed?
7. In what ways do the generational differences between the couples reveal information about themselves and their views?
8. Why does the conflict start between the neighbors? What factors escalate the conflict?
9. How does Frank tend to his garden? How does his view of what it means to garden conflict with Tania’s view of what it means to garden?
10. How does classism and racism enter the conflict? How does each character react?
11. What lessons do you think the play’s characters’ have learned about and from each other?
12. After the play, what do you think happens between these neighbors? Do you think that they are able to stay cordial?

# Native Gardens

## ACTIVITIES

### Planting a Garden

You have a plot of land that is 10 foot by 10 foot. What kind of garden are you going to plant? Will it be a flower garden, vegetable garden, a combination of the two or some other design?

Create a diagram of where certain plants will be planted. Are you looking for maximum color? Are you looking to grow food to eat? Are you looking to have plants in bloom and growing all year?

What plants would you choose if you are planting in Colorado and want to use less water? How will this affect your planting?

Compare similarities and differences for your plant plot to others in the class. Is there anything that they have chosen to include in their garden that you would like to add to yours?

Your 10 foot by 10 foot garden is next to another classmate's 10 foot by 10 foot garden with a 5 foot space between them. How can you work together to create a common space that does not compromise either garden design?

Now that the class has designed individual garden and communal spaces between them, how would you, as landscape designer, order the gardens to create a welcoming and engaging greenspace that has a sense of cohesion?

Discuss what compromises, consensus, or conflicts that arose with your neighboring garden? What made this an easy process or a difficulty process? Was there an element in your garden that had to be left out or that you had to add?

**Colorado Visual Arts:** Recognize, articulate, and debate that the visual arts are a means for expression.

**Colorado Civics PG:** Analyze and practice rights, roles, and responsibilities of citizens.

### Comparing Botanical Literature

There are many stories for the stage that center around plants from *Jack and the Beanstalk* to *Little Shop of Horrors*. As a class collect as many sources as you can — include books, poems, songs, movies, plays and other medium. Discuss how the plants unite and separate the characters. In terms of the themes of neighbor, friendship, nurture, and/or intergenerational relationships, what commonalities do these sources hold?

**Colorado Reading PG:** Demonstrate comprehension of a variety of informational, literary, and persuasive texts.



# PERSPECTIVES

**Make your experience unforgettable when you join us for one of these insightful, educational events:**

## Creative Team Perspectives

**Apr 6 | 6:00pm | Conservatory Theatre**

Get an exclusive insider's perspective before the show when you join us for a free, professionally-moderated discussion with the creative team.

## Cast Perspectives

**Apr 15 | 1:30pm**

Join a fun and engaging discussion with the actors after the performance.

## Perspectives: Theatre & Theology

**Apr 17 | 6:30pm**

Join Pastor Dan Bollman of the Rocky Mountain Evangelical Lutheran Synod after the performance to examine each show through a theological lens.

## Perspectives: Higher Education Advisory Council

**Apr 22 | 1:30pm**

Participate in a topical discussion led by members of our academic community after the performance.

# WANT TO KNOW MORE?

## The Denver Public Library recommends: Read!

*Bringing Nature Home* by Douglas Tallamy.

Written by renowned entomologist Douglas Tallamy, *Bringing Nature Home* is a call to action that caused conversation to blossom across the country about how we use our backyards. Full of easy and practical recommendations for everyone with a plot of dirt, Tallamy teaches us how to save the planet, one lawn at a time, by growing native plants that support local wildlife. So, not to take sides, but Tania was totally right about the whole 'planting native gardens' thing.

## Watch!

*The Garden* (2008) Dir. Scott Hamilton Kennedy.

The largest urban garden in the U.S. began after the 1992 Los Angeles riots as a form of healing. More than 350 farming families grew a variety of food, including bananas, apples, papayas, and corn, in 14 acres surrounded by L.A. warehouses. The farmers rely on the food they grow and some see it as sacred. In 2004, the farmers are given an eviction notice for less than 60 days because the land's new owner wants to build warehouses. The farmers organize to fight to save their oasis from being bulldozed.

## Listen!

*This is where you belong : the art and science of loving the place you live* by Melody Warnick.

How does one come to fall in love with a city? Easy to do if you are well-connected in San Francisco, Chicago, or even Denver, but what about being a stranger in a small town? This was the question that Melody Warnick pondered after relocating to Blacksburg, Virginia for her husband's job. Finding herself feeling isolated in her new surroundings, she went to work making herself feel at home. Toward this end, Warnick established ten "Love Where You Live" principles, like support local businesses, or make friends with the neighbors, and then she devised ways to put these into practice. Her activities range from learning your neighborhood by walking it, becoming a regular at a restaurant, and knowing your neighbors by name. Warnick's book is the perfect guide for anyone newly transplanted, looking to set roots and thrive under a new sun.

## Download!

*The Darling Dahlias and the Cucumber Tree* by Susan Wittig Albert.

We all know that gardeners are passionate about their plants, as we saw in *Native Gardens*, sometimes an acorn can break the camel's back. Experience all the charm and strife of a Depression Era gardening club in this cozy mystery. The Dahlias are a group of gardeners named after their benefactor, Daliah Blackstone, who bequeathed the Darlings her house to use as their clubhouse. Much to the consternation of her nephew! Albert will keep you guessing who or what is digging around the cucumber tree even as the dead bodies keep cropping up! Visit [denver.overdrive.com](http://denver.overdrive.com) to download this and other eMedia.



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