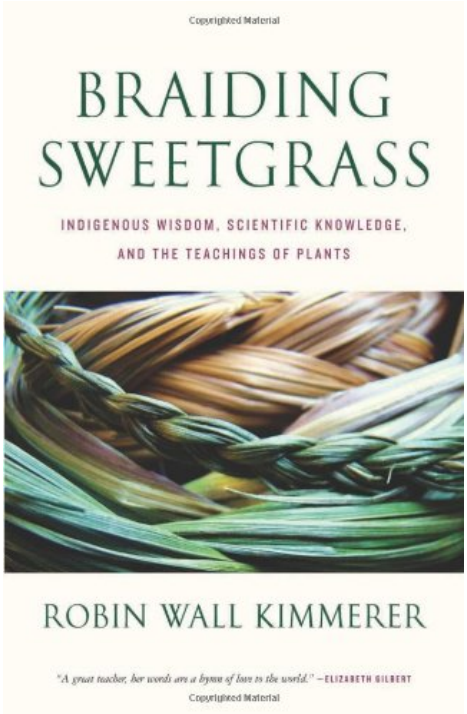
Women's Month Reading Recommendations

03/01/2026

USU Eastern Speaker Series



Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Libby Book of the Month!

As a botanist, Robin Wall Kimmerer has been trained to ask questions of nature with the tools of science. As a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, she embraces the notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. In Braiding Sweetgrass, Kimmerer brings these two lenses of knowledge together to take us on "a journey that is every bit as mythic as it is scientific, as sacred as it is historical, as clever as it is wise" (Elizabeth Gilbert). Drawing on her life as an indigenous scientist, and as a woman, Kimmerer shows how other living beings—asters and goldenrod, strawberries and squash, salamanders, algae, and sweetgrass—offer us gifts and lessons, even if we've forgotten how to hear their voices. In reflections that range from the creation of Turtle Island to the forces that threaten its flourishing today, she circles toward a central argument: that the awakening of ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world. For only when we can hear the languages of other beings will we be capable of understanding the generosity of the earth, and learn to give our own gifts in return.

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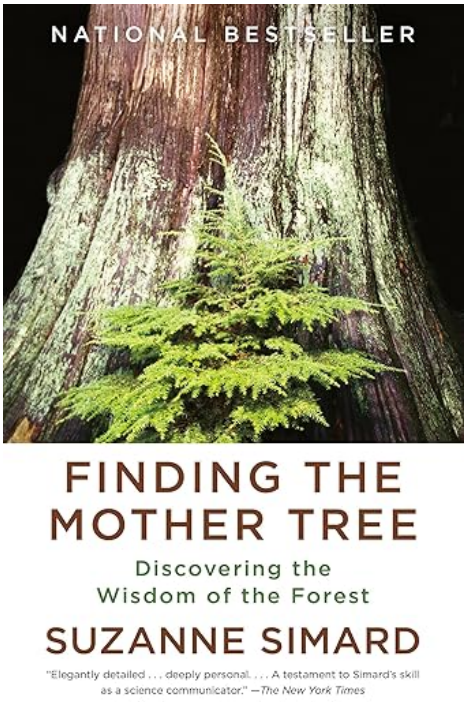

Finding the Mother Tree by Suzanne Simard

From the world's leading forest ecologist who forever changed how people view trees and their connections to one another and to other living things in the forest—a moving, deeply personal journey of discovery. Suzanne Simard is a pioneer on the frontier of plant communication and intelligence; her TED talks have been viewed by more than 10 million people worldwide. In this, her first book, now available in paperback, Simard

brings us into her world, the intimate world of the trees, in which she brilliantly illuminates the fascinating and vital truths--that trees are not simply the source of timber or pulp, but are a complicated, interdependent circle of life; that forests are social, cooperative creatures connected through underground networks by which trees communicate their vitality and vulnerabilities with communal lives not that different from our own. Simard writes--in inspiring, illuminating, and accessible ways —how trees, living side by side for hundreds of years, have evolved, how they learn and adapt their behaviors, recognize neighbors, compete and cooperate with one another with sophistication, characteristics ascribed to human intelligence, traits that are the essence of civil societies--and at the center of it all, the Mother Trees: the mysterious, powerful forces that connect and sustain the others that surround them.

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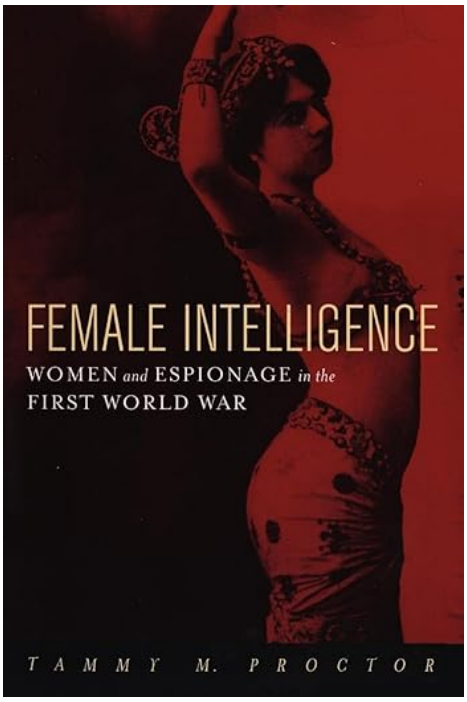

Female Intelligence: Women and Espionage in the First World War by Tammy M. Proctor

When the Germans invaded her small Belgian village in 1914, Marthe Cnockaert's home was burned and her family separated. After getting a job at a German hospital, and winning the Iron Cross for her service to the Reich, she was approached by a neighbor and invited to become an intelligence agent for the British. Not without trepidation, Cnockaert embarked on a career as a spy, providing information and engaging in sabotage before her capture and imprisonment in 1916. After the war, she was paid and decorated by a grateful British government for her service. Cnockaert's is only one of the surprising and gripping stories that comprise Female Intelligence. This is the first history of the female spies who served Britain during World War I, focusing on both the powerful cultural images of these women and the realities, challenges, and contradictions of intelligence service. Between the founding of modern British intelligence organizations in 1909 and the demobilization of 1919, more than 6,000 women served the British government in either civil or military occupations as members of the intelligence community. These women performed a variety of services, and they represented an astonishing diversity of nationality, age, and class. From Aphra Behn, who spied for the British government in the seventeenth century, to the most well known example, Mata Hari, female spies have a long history, existing in juxtaposition to the folkloric notion of women as chatty, gossipy, and indiscreet. Using personal accounts, letters, official documents and newspaper reports, Female Intelligence interrogates different, and apparently contradictory, constructions of gender in the competing spheres of espionage activity.

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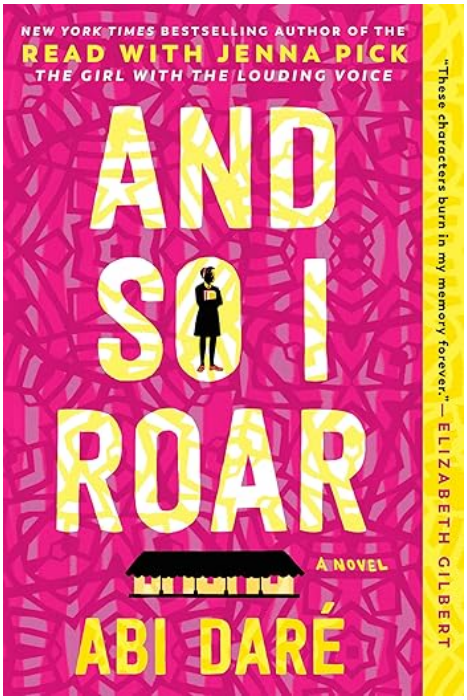

And So I Roar by Abi Daré

A stunning, inspiring new novel from Abi Daré, New York Times bestselling author of The Girl with the Louding Voice. When Tia accidentally overhears a whispered conversation between her mother—terminally ill and lying in a hospital bed in Port Harcourt, Nigeria—and her aunt, the repercussions will send her on a desperate quest to uncover a secret her mother has been hiding for nearly two decades. Back home in Lagos a few days later, Adunni, a plucky fourteen-year-old runaway, is lying awake in Tia's guest room. Having escaped from her rural village in a desperate bid to seek a better future, she's finally found refuge with Tia, who has helped her enroll in school. It's always been Adunni's dream to get an education, and she's bursting with excitement. Suddenly, there's a horrible knocking at the front gate. . . . It's only the beginning of a harrowing ordeal that will see Tia forced to make a terrible choice between protecting Adunni or finally learning the truth behind the secret her mother has been hiding.

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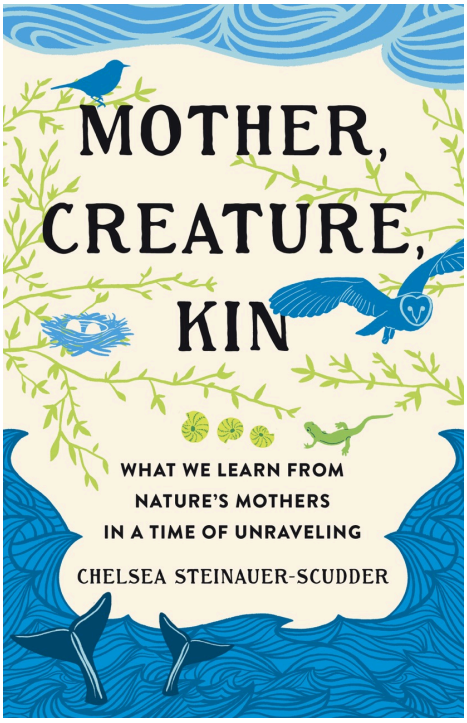

Mother, Creature, Kin: What We Learn from Nature's Mothers in a Time of Unraveling by Chelsea Steinauer-Scudder

Luminous nonfiction about the natural world from essayist Chelsea Steinauer-Scudder, who asks: what can other-than-human creatures teach us about mothering, belonging, caregiving, loss, and resiliency? What does it mean to be a mother in an era of climate catastrophe? And what can we learn from the plants and creatures who mother at the edges of their world's unraveling? Becoming a mother in this time means bringing life into a world that appears to be coming undone. Drawing upon ecology, mythology, and her own experiences as a new mother, Steinauer-Scudder confronts what it means to "mother": to do the good work of being in service to the living world. What if we could all mother the places we live and the beings with whom we share those places? And what if they also mother us? In prose that teems with longing, lyricism, and knowledge of ecology, Steinauer-Scudder writes of the silent flight and aural maps of barn owls, of nursing whales, of real and imagined forests, of tidal marshes, of ancient single-celled organisms, and of newly planted gardens. The creatures inhabiting these stories teach us about centering, belonging, entanglement, edgework, homemaking, and how to imagine the future. Rooted in wonder while never shying away from loss, Mother, Creature, Kin reaches toward a language of inclusive care learned from creatures living at the brink. Writing in the tradition of Camille Dungy, Elizabeth Rush, and Margaret Renkl, Steinauer-Scudder invites us into the daily, obligatory, sacred work of care. Despair and fear will not save the world any more than they will raise our children, and while we don't know what the future holds, we know it will need mothers.

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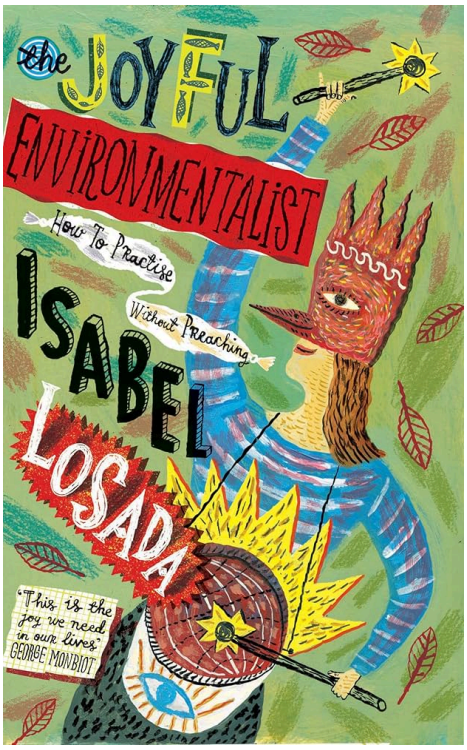

The Joyful Environmentalist: How to Practise without Preaching by Isabel Losada

Finally! A book about saving our planet that is fast, funny and inspiring too. Written in short chapters for busy people, Isabel doesn't bother with an examination of the problem but gets right on with the solutions. Her aim: to look for every single way we can take care of the planet; how we live and work, travel, shop, eat, drink, dress, vote, play, volunteer, bank – everything. And to do this wholeheartedly, energetically and joyfully. Beginning with losing her cool in a restaurant that will only provide plastic cutlery, Isabel journeys through native tree planting in the Highlands of Scotland, playing Samba drums with Extinction Rebellion, interviewing in person the people that supply her energy and food – through every solution she can find – until both narrator and reader are fully equipped to be part of the pollution solution.

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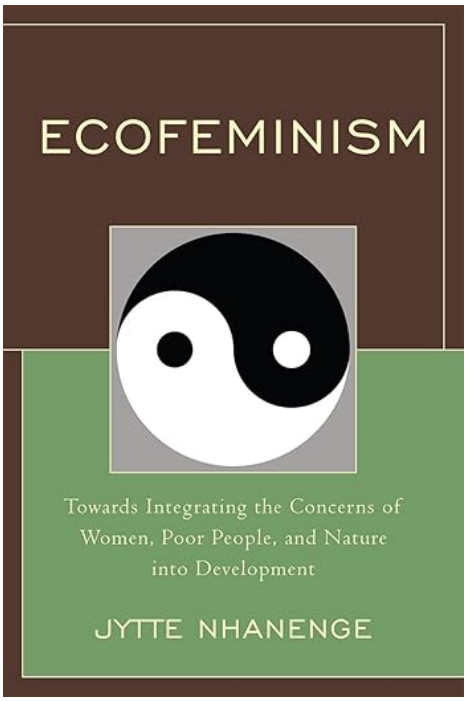

Ecofeminism: Towards Integrating the Concerns of Women, Poor People, and Nature into Development by Jytte Nhanenge

Ecofeminism is for those who desire to improve their understanding of the current crises of poverty, environmental destruction, violence, and human rights abuses, and their causes. It is an ecofeminist analysis of modern society's dualized, patriarchal structure, showing that one-sided reductionist, masculine, and quantitative (yang) perceptions inform science, economics, and technology, resulting in subordination of holistic, feminine, and qualitative (yin) values. This yin-yang imbalance manifests as patriarchal domination of women, poor people, and nature, leading to the above crises. Since similar values inform Third World Development, its activities are also exploitative. Thus, rather than improving human well-being, development increases poverty and natural degradation in the South. Modern patriarchy manifests in neo-liberal policies that promote "free" global economic markets and trades, generating huge profits to the political and economic elites with devastating results for society and the environment.

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No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference by Greta Thunberg

The groundbreaking speeches of Greta Thunberg, the young climate activist who has become the voice of a generation, including her historic address to the United Nations. In August 2018 a fifteen-year-old Swedish girl, Greta Thunberg, decided not to go to school one day in order to protest the climate crisis. Her actions sparked a global movement, inspiring millions of students to go on strike for our planet, forcing governments to listen, and earning her a Nobel Peace Prize nomination. No One Is Too Small to Make A Difference brings you Greta in her own words, for the first time. Collecting her speeches that have made history across the globe, from the United Nations to Capitol Hill and mass street protests, her book is a rallying cry for why we must all wake up and fight to protect the living planet, no matter how powerless we feel. Our future depends upon it.

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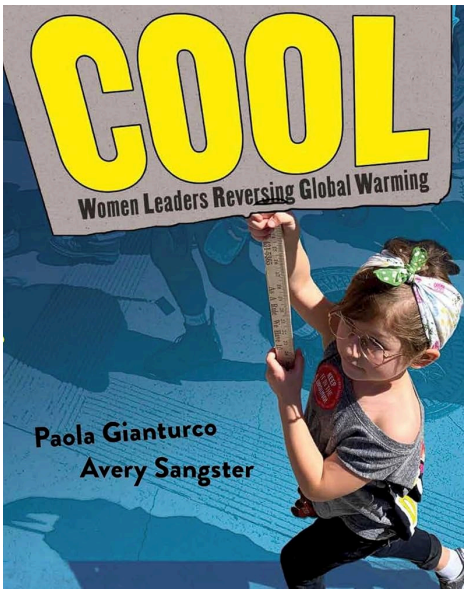

COOL: Women Leaders Reversing Global Warming by Paola Gianturco and Avery Sangster

Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac, architects of the 2015 Paris Agreement, report that "Nations with greater female representation in positions of power have smaller climate footprints. Companies with women on their executive boards are more likely to invest in renewable energy and develop products that help solve the climate crisis. Women legislators vote for environmental protections almost twice as frequently as men, and women who lead investment firms are twice as likely to make investment decisions based on how companies treat their employees and the environment." For this book, Paola Gianturco and her 12-year-old granddaughter and co-author, Avery Sangster, interviewed and photographed heads of grassroots organizations, activists, politicians, corporate executives, scholars, and presidents of nonprofits in the United States, United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, Tanzania, Australia, Sri Lanka, India, Canada and Hong Kong. All of them are using intelligence, creativity, and courage. COOL: Women Leaders Reversing Global Warming tells their important, inspiring stories in their own words and suggests action steps so you can join them on this existential journey.

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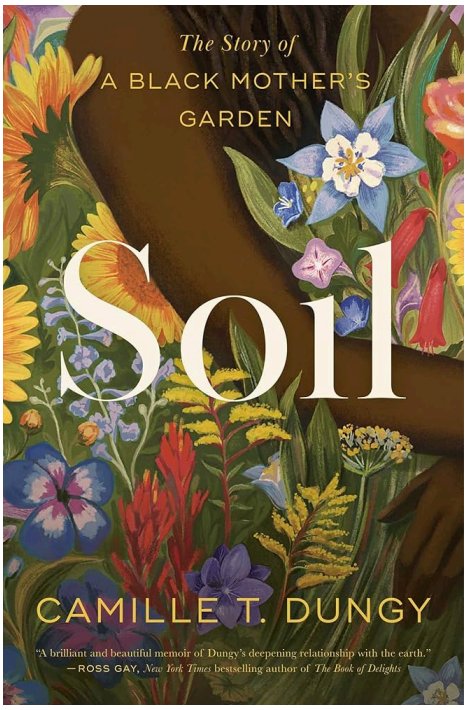

Soil: The Story of a Black Mother's Garden by Camille T. Dungy

A seminal work that expands how we talk about the natural world and the environment as National Book Critics Circle Criticism finalist Camille T. Dungy diversifies her garden in the predominately white community of Fort Collins, Colorado. In Soil: The Story of a Black Mother's Garden, poet and scholar Camille T. Dungy recounts the seven-year odyssey to diversify her garden in the predominately white community of Fort Collins, Colorado. When she moved there in 2013, with her husband and daughter, the community held strict restrictions about what residents could and could not plant in their gardens. In resistance to the homogenous policies that limited the possibility and wonder that grows from the earth, Dungy employs the various plants, herbs, vegetables, and flowers she grows in her garden as metaphor and treatise for how homogeneity threatens the future of our planet, and why cultivating diverse and intersectional language in our national discourse about the environment is the best means of protecting it. Definitive and singular, Soil functions at the nexus of nature writing, environmental justice, and prose to encourage you to recognize the relationship between the peoples of the African diaspora and the land on which they live, and to understand that wherever soil rests beneath their feet is home.

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