

# AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006  
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## American Life in Poetry: Column 448

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

I open every spring with a garden more precisely laid out and cared for than the year before, and by the end of summer it's collapsed into a tangle of weeds, bugs and disorder. Here's Gabriel Welsch, a poet from Pennsylvania, carrying a similar experience right into winter.

### A Garden's End

Forsythia, scaled and bud-bangled,  
I pruned to a thatch of leaves  
for the curb, by the squirrel-gnawed  
corn, silk strewn, kernels tooth carved  
and husks shorn over the ground  
pocked with paw prints.

The borers mashed the squash vine,  
the drought tugged the roots of sage,  
catmint languished by the sidewalk,  
tools grew flowers of rust.

That winter we left our hope  
beneath the snow, loved through the last  
of the onions, watched the late leeks freeze  
to crystal, bent like sedges, their shadows  
on the snow. That winter we left  
our hope beneath the snow.

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