

Clearing

by [Sarah Rossiter](#) in the [January 2023](#) issue

What is this need to clear
the hill, to sever saplings,
one by one *dragged to the
withered bracken by the load;*
not birches though, but oaks
with leaves that cling well past
December, hiding all that might
be seen in the woods that lie
beyond. The hill is steep,
the footing rough, and lurking
in the underbrush, invasives
creep with stealth intention,
barberry and bittersweet
conspire to conquer, pierce,
and strangle. The work is hard,
the roots dig deep, but as I age,
the longing grows to pare,
to peel, strip away down to
the bare and open heart,
down to all that lies within,
the trillium, the fox's den,
sun-shadows on the forest floor.