

## 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.