

Summary:

In this episode, we celebrate World Landscape Architecture Month and Autism Acceptance Month with a conversation about connection! Maci and guest Caressa Joyce explore the deep connections humans have with the land and how rituals and practices help connect and reflect on our influences that shape nature and community.

[This interdisciplinary conversation is guided by the following questions:](#)

What is the overarching theme of your work and philosophy?

What is your origin story?

Who/what is part of your lineage?

What are some of the earth-based things you do?

What do you wish everyone knew/practiced to help humanity and Mother Earth?

About Caressa:

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A Yoga-Massage-Energy Therapist, A Life Cycles Celebrant, Artist, Activist, Mama, Life Partner, Oracle Card Reader, Mystic, Healer, Teacher, Friend, Sacred Circle Leader, Writer, Earth and Moon Lover.

Upcoming Events:

[Landscape Lore with the Landscape Nerd](#) April 24th- Get your tickets!

[Seasonal Tea Ceremony: Bellatierra](#) April 27th -Get your tickets!

[Guided Meditation and Tea Blending](#) May 9th - SOLD OUT

Takeaways:

- The interconnection between self-care and caring for the earth is vital.
- Nature serves as a profound teacher in understanding life's complexities.

Caressa was so prepared and wrote out the following answers :)

What is the overarching theme of your work and philosophy? The interconnection between our bodies and Mother Earth's body. Care, respect, and reverence for our planet and our ancestors

What is your origin story?

Grew up always going to forests, creeks, and caves to collect feathers, stones, and shells, At age 9, went to a church service with a friend and felt Spirit in a full deep way that I never had before, started Yoga at 16, Kent for Art degree, yoga, political activism, and studying goddess

worship, yoga teacher certified and reiki and Jin shin certified at 26, continue to study ceremony and Somatic coaching.

Who/what is part of your lineage?

Lilacs, friends, mom: welsh and British heritage, fundraising, kindness, dad: African American and Mexican heritage, shining light in the dark, Margot and Bill Milcetic for yoga and Jin shin, Joy Ravelli, red tailed hawks for hope, otters for playfulness, deer for kindness, Animal Spirit cards by Jamie Sams, Alice Walker and Alice Hoffman, Diane Stein for reiki, my clients and students, Sinead O'Connor, Jimi Hendrix, Luis Mojica, Kathryn Fink, Becca Piastrelli, the Women's Studio workshop, adrienne marie brown, Ixtol Paloma Cervantes

What are some of the earth-based things you do?

Reiki, ceremony, prayer, rituals, altar building, ancestor veneration with vocalizations and gratitude prayers, herb garden, herb drinking and tinctures, candle making, intention setting, dream work, channel journaling, meditation, talking to plants and animals

What do you wish everyone knew/practiced to help humanity and Mother Earth?

Know that we are not at the center or at the apex of some hierarchy of living beings. Animals and plants are our kin and their lives are as equally important as ours. Talk to them, converse and start a relationship with them. Our daily practices and habits and actions will shift in the healthier direction when we do this and embody this idea.

Maci Nelson (00:00)

Hello everyone and welcome back to the Landscape Nerd Podcast. My name is Maci Nelson. I am your host. I'm just a nerd who loves the landscape and I love how we talk about it. And I also love that pretty much if you are curious about anything outside your front door, there's something for us to talk about and something for us to connect to, which is the topic of today's episode. It's how we connect to the land. There are many ways to do it and everyone has their own

unique way of doing it. But I thought that in honor of World Landscape Architecture Month, we should connect with the landscape however we see fit, and also talk to other people in our lives about how they do it. We might find new ways, it might be really interesting. They might learn something from you too. And really, that's, that's the gist of it. I am interviewing someone who's really, really cool. Her name is Caressa Joyce.

she will introduce herself more formally in a little bit, but, she and I met over tea and ceremony as a way to connect with the land and the seasons. And I really wanted to bring her onto the podcast to talk more about that. And the way that she suggested we do this was actually by reading questions to each other. And, I just thought they were really, really sweet.

So the way the episode's going to run is we're gonna kind of chit chat a little bit and then we will ask the following questions and take turns answering them back and forth. One, what is the overarching theme of your work and philosophy?

Two, what is your origin story? Three, who and what is a part of your lineage? Four, what are some of the earth based land based practices that you do? And five, what do you wish everyone knew or practiced to help?

humanity and Mother Earth and connect with it. So that's what we're going to talk about today. And it means a lot to me to talk to someone who is not in landscape architecture, but who also really values the landscape and how we relate to it. Also, as you'll hear, she was so accepting of just me as a person. I basically came into this.

tea ceremony that she was running and I was like, I'm autistic and I like tea and I felt really, really welcome. And April is also Autism Acceptance Month. So this was just a really great way to celebrate that. I hope you enjoy this conversation and we're also going to be highlighting some events that we have coming up. So stay tuned to the end to listen to that. And I look forward to seeing you at the end of the episode. Okay. Enjoy.

Maci (02:42)

Would you like to take a moment to ground

Caressa Joyce (02:44)

I would love it. I love that

you suggested that.

Maci (02:48)

Yeah. Okay.

We'll take a couple deep breaths.

Caressa Joyce (02:50)

Hmm.

Maci (02:54)

Hey, hi.

Caressa Joyce (02:56)

Hi, that was lovely. I think all things should start like that. Meetings, all conversations.

Maci (03:01)

I I love that. Actually, could you imagine how wild that would be if we recommended that to like a customer service person on the phone? We're like, before we start, we can take a moment to ground

Caressa Joyce (03:15)

I think

once they got over there, like, is this person telling me what to do? I think then it could actually be a really great conversation.

Maci (03:21)

I know.

I'm open to it. I think this conversation that people

can watch or listen to us have can set the stage for them to investigate their own ways of connecting to the land in general. There's many ways to do it. Generally, I don't think there's a wrong way as long as no one's getting But I think doing it intentionally gives a lot of meaning to what those ways are. And I'd actually just given a talk on...

making rituals for people in design so that it feels more intentional and gives a bit more meaning to the work. And we talk about this a lot. So I'm glad that we can continue that. yeah, no, happy to share. Thanks for asking. Because we'll probably talk about it a little bit later. One ritual that I do every morning is barefoot outside with a cup of coffee, no matter the weather. So that helps me ground. That's one of my personal rituals. But we talked about two kinds of rituals. One's the...

Caressa Joyce (03:59)

that's great. I'm curious, what's like one of the rituals if you want to share?

Mm-hmm.

Maci (04:21)

individual and then collective and then so a collective ritual that My my friend Maggie and I do we will do co-working together like several times throughout the week and it's just this intentional time where she lives in Des Moines and I'm here in Cleveland and so it's this like intentional time that we're going across time zones and that will sit together

sharing that space is meaningful. Yeah and also ceremonies like yours those those become a part of collective rituals too. That means something. Can you think of anything? You didn't think of anything?

Caressa Joyce (04:43)

Mmm.

Mm-hmm.

Yeah. I like it. Rituals

that I do for, like daily rituals that help me to, to ground specifically or just anything.

Maci (05:02)
build capacity

for your day if that means grounding, sure, but sometimes it's like, it could be meditating too to like just get yourself going.

Caressa Joyce (05:10)

Yeah, so I start my day when I first wake up trying to remember my dreams. That's the first thing. And then there's a prayer that I say every morning before I get out of bed that helps me to feel connected to the directions and the elements to all the layers of myself known in yogic philosophy as the koshas. And so it's physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and energetic.

And so I just align myself with these directions with spirit and with the layers of myself and with my community, plants and animals, all human beings, well and bright and spirit guides.

Maci (05:44)

that's so beautiful. I met you because you were hosting, co-hosting a seasonal tea ceremony. was like the first one.

at Verbena, which is a non-alcoholic shop here in Ohio City. And I remember walking in and you asked everyone to introduce themselves, what brought them here. And then I was like, I'm autistic and I like tea. And you and Amber both just were like, yep, great. And it felt really warm and accepting. And I have been to so many of them since. I think I've missed like a few of them, but I've come pretty consistently there and learning more about.

Caressa Joyce (06:18)

Yes, you have.

Maci (06:20)

your philosophy and I thought it would be perfect to have you talk about the way you are connecting to land here today. So that's what I think we're gonna talk about. Awesome. Okay, well would you please introduce yourself?

Caressa Joyce (06:31)

That sounds great.

Yeah, so my name is Caressa Joyce and I do a few things. It's hard to just say one. I guess my main thing that I do is I'm a licensed massage therapist. So I meet with people that have been feeling either chronic pain or acute pain or really need some relaxation and the styles that I provide are a traditional therapeutic massage, also Thai yoga massage, which I learned when I was in Thailand.

I also incorporate Reiki into it. I'm a Reiki master. And so that's another one of my offerings. And that's another way that we have connected as well as you've come to the Reiki shares. And, but then also, yeah, so I offer ceremony and this is something that started about, I don't even know, gosh, maybe six years ago. I really wanted to live more seasonally and mindfully of the cycle of the wheel of the year. And so I did a lot of research and listened to a lot of podcasts.

and did a lot of online learning and read a lot of books. so, and then really though, just doing it, feeling like I just need to do it. So I met with a lot of women that were on my street and we already had a book club going. So we started to do every winter solstice, summer solstice and the equinoxes for spring and autumn. And then it's just developed there from there.

So not only seasonal ceremonies, but I offer also ceremonies for people that are going through life transitions. So I call myself a ceremonialist. That's another one of my titles. And I also offer somatic coaching. So those are sort of the identities that I hold. I'm also a mother and a partner and a community member. Yeah, I think that's about it.

Maci (08:20)

I find benefit in your ceremonies and your practices as a designer. I think it's important that we show other designers this kind of connection, this deep connection to land and wanting to honor it.

and understand it better seems relatively universal with the people I've talked to. I'm not saying everyone holds that, but I think an opportunity to demonstrate what that might look like and give people other ideas on how they can connect more deeply. whether it's through some questions that we're going to share together or having some tools and resources or even attending events, I think that's something I would love for the audience to leave with today.

Caressa Joyce (08:48)

and it's a mission, a mission, and our mission is to assist the people who are in danger of being taken by some other great problem that's

Maci (08:57)

Okay. So I will read the first one,

What is your overarching theme of your work and philosophy?

Caressa Joyce (09:06)

I would say that the overarching theme is the interconnection that we have between our bodies and Mother Earth's body. So that when we are thinking about how much we care for ourselves and show respect to ourselves and reverence for our own bodies, which I don't think it's always easy to do in our society, especially if you are in a body that is of color, if you're in a body that is a femme body, if you are

in a body that might be having a disability. I think that it's a really radical act of self-preservation and self-autonomy and sovereignty to say that, I'm going to take care of myself and give reverence to my body. And I think the more that we do that, the more it ripples out and we are then seeing how interconnected our bodies are to other bodies. And when we feel healthy and bring healthy food into us, we look back at the source of that and then want to take care of our mother earth.

And then I think it reflects back the more that we take care of Earth and, you or maybe in gardening, or maybe we're a part of a farm share, then we're bringing that healthiness back into our bodies. So, yeah, I guess the philosophy is that we are all connected, that there isn't separation and that even though it's a lot more effort and a lot more

conscious and intentional thinking to take these extra steps and maybe it costs extra money or it takes extra time to plan but to really be intentional and mindful about what we're putting in our bodies and taking care of our bodies.

Maci (10:44)

Great, I love the interconnectedness. My overall overarching theme or philosophy is that it comes in two parts. One is messes can be cleaned up by beautiful things.

And then the other one is kind of the subset of that you can learn big lessons softly. Like not every lesson that's worthwhile has to come and hit you hard. And I believe a way of doing that is through storytelling and conversations with people. So that way people understand there's a softer way to learn things.

My experience is that a lot of people think that you can only clean up kind of the messes with like rags, right? or that it's ruined or that because something doesn't look pristine that it's bad, right?

So I hold those two things together, being like, if you hesitate to clean up something because you're worried it's gonna get dirty, like the other piece of it's gonna get dirty, then the mess just stays there. And so, how do you go about...

Caressa Joyce (11:29)
and I'll later, bye.

Mm-hmm.

Maci (11:43)

tackling big problems and big thoughts in an elegant way. relatively new thought, but that's sort of where I'm hovering

Caressa Joyce (11:46)

you

Maci (11:51)

beautifully.

Caressa Joyce (11:52)

Yeah, I'm fascinated by this idea and I want to, if it's okay, tease it out a little bit more because I'm wondering if there's an example that you have of this in your life.

Maci (12:01)

Yeah,

so there's, so through my like friendships is one way that I've learned how to confront some of my own issues when it comes to self-worth and belief and values that instead of having to be, I don't know, heartbroken or disrespected or, you know, subjected to someone else's cruelty or dismissiveness,

I've been able to tease out in conversations about what it is that I value and how would I go about protecting that and what does that look like and just dialogue being the bridge to help me implement those in real life rather than having to have learned it in a hard way or when I've learned a lesson, not have to learn it harder. Like I feel like sometimes you make one mistake and then you make the mistake again. Well, sometimes.

Caressa Joyce (12:51)

Mm-hmm.

Maci (12:55)

having these kinds of conversations of support, this beautiful network of people allows for the small mistake to make sure you don't make a bigger mistake, but also to give you the confidence that you can handle the mistake too. So I'm not saying that it's to prevent anything,

Caressa Joyce (13:06)

Yeah.

Maci (13:15)

messier parts of life and noticing something and bringing it to the light and acknowledging that it's a mess, right? Acknowledging that something is messy and I think is also part of it and saying like and

I want to clean it up well. And yeah, I want to handle this well.

Caressa Joyce (13:33)

So it's like, I think it kind of goes back to what we were talking about as building capacity of if you have a little lesson, then it helps you with the bigger things because you're growing, taking steps and also practicing with people that you already kind of have a relationship with so that it's when you get to someone that you're not as comfortable with, that it's easier. And I like to this thought of like using something beautiful to clean it up. And so your your beautiful thing to clean it up is

your conversation, it's your dialogue, it's your openness and willingness to be vulnerable and to be, yeah, just in a relationship with this person and stuff, instead of throwing the baby out with the bathwater, saying like, okay, this can be fixed. What's the best, what's my highest self that I can bring to this and going from there.

Maci (14:16)

Yeah.

Yeah, all the time. Like, that's the thing is like, and I love that you said it is about capacity, because I think I forget that word a lot, even though I use it all the time. I forget all that it means. I forget all the depth and kind of not to deduce it down to function, but like all that it serves in your life when you build capacity. So, yeah, that's.

Caressa Joyce (14:36)

Yeah.

Maci (14:37)

Thanks for teasing that out. It's still not like fully fleshed out. I feel like my brain does a lot of great one liners, but but and everything feels complete when I say it, but it doesn't necessarily. I don't know how that sounds like to other people.

So that kind of leads into the next question, which is the your origin story. So like, why does something like that feel so complete to me? And like, it can resonate with you. where does it start? Where does your understanding and approach to the world start? So what's your origin story?

Caressa Joyce (14:50)

I know what you mean.

Yeah, so, and I love this question because it's so vast, but that's also a little bit overwhelming to me because I start to think of every possible book that has influenced me, every person, every place. So I guess I just have to go into this response knowing that I'm not going to touch on everything, but the highlights, I guess, of what has helped bring me to where I'm at right now and my understanding of things. Mainly,

You know, well, first and foremost, my parents, of course, because they were such a great influence. I feel like from my mom, I learned so much about.

how to be kind to people, how to be compassionate and how to understand that even though I have this perspective from where I'm coming from, this is just reminding me of what we were talking about earlier, that there are so many perspectives and to just be open and compassionate to everybody's perspective. And then from my dad, I feel like I have learned so much about bringing light to the darkness.

bringing humor to heavy situations. Yeah, and just finding joy, way to find joy. And also, my dad and I share the same birthday, and we're both Taurus's, which is notorious for being all about the senses and awakening the senses. So I feel like from him just definitely knowing how to cook and knowing what herbs to put together and knowing like, yeah, how important.

A scent is and that is part of I would say my origin story too is Growing up around forests and flowers and just always loving to be outside and being knee-deep in creeks and going into caves I feel fortunate to where I grew up. It was still at the time pretty Wild in a way like there were still a lot of forests now It's all of course been turned into strip malls, but it at the time we could

go out on a Saturday afternoon, my friends and I look for frogs and that's what we did. So that's definitely part of my origin story. think too, I am appreciative of my parents for taking me to church. I mean, I'm not a Christian. I think Jesus Christ was a great person and a wonderful prophet and sage, but I am not a Christian, but they instilled in me like, you know, belief, this understanding that there is something greater.

And I do remember too, going to a church, wasn't the church that my parents took me to, I went to a church with my friends this one time, I think I was like eight or nine, and really feeling spirit in a way that I had never felt before, feeling vibration, feeling something like I was connected to something really big and that I was a part of it. And I don't even know if there are words for it, but just feeling...

greatness, grandness inside and around me. There was a lot of singing. It was like a candlelit service and it was just immense for my little person to experience and it really stuck with me. Yeah, and then after that, you know, I had another friend when I was 16 who introduced me to yoga and I think it was her dad's friend, was it the teacher? And so we would just go to this office building in Rocky River.

which during the day had all these desks and then we would push all the desks and chairs to the side because that was the only space that they had for this yoga class. And this was back in 96 and we would go every single Wednesday and I just felt again that feeling of spirit. Like I would go somewhere else at the end of it in Shavasana. I would leave my body and just go

somewhere else. And so I always was just interested in this practice of yoga. We were the youngest people there. We were in our teens.

but it was just a handful of middle-aged and older women. And I remember thinking, okay, they're flexible. I should stick with this. So was the physical part of it, but it was also the feeling that I got from it. And then when I went to Kent State and met my teacher, Margo, who's been my teacher for teacher training, for Jinxian energy work, for so many things, she's just been my mentor. And when I went there,

And she taught me yoga philosophy that sort of brought a whole other layer into it too of it igniting something that was not just physical and not just what I felt but it really sparked my intuition and logical part of the brain too. And so when I went to Kent too, I studied fine art and textiles and that helped me to

learn about different cultures throughout history and especially goddess culture and the way that cultures throughout history have revered the feminine and the earth as a feminine power and the sacredness of that. so yeah, and then I think really having yoga as the foundation led me towards learning the energy work of Reiki and Jinshin.

Then when I went to Thailand to learn Thai yoga massage, that got me more into learning massage. So then I came back here to the West and learned Western massage and got licensed in that. And then from there, just learning so much more about the cycles of the seasons in the earth and wanting to celebrate them with ceremony. So that's, yeah, kind of how it all began and where it's at now.

Maci (20:18)

beautiful. Thank you for sharing. Because I wanted to like I was taking notes while you were talking, because something stood out to me, especially from like a landscape lens, that the huge thing is the energetic connection. Like, I think, as designers, and when we're drawing up landscapes, we are taught a lot of the like seasonality to consider that and like selecting plants and even when you're scheduling how to when to build something like there's a lot of other systems are coming.

Caressa Joyce (20:28)

Mm-hmm.

Maci (20:46)

that are coming to when you're drawing up plans, but the energetic connection, the like person to person connection that happens in the community engagement pieces, like there's not a lot of acknowledgement, I think, about how to attune to that and what does that feel like. But when you talked about that big resonant feeling, it reminded me of recently I was in New Orleans during that big snowstorm, storm Enzo.

Caressa Joyce (21:08)

Hmm.

Maci (21:10)

But the day before I happened to go to Congo Square and that was one of those times where I stepped foot into a place that I knew had energy from before, from something really big happening here. And that was, you know, magnificent. And I think it's important for us to have that conversation because even though something that seemed as technical as design and building built environment, but we build memorials.

Caressa Joyce (21:16)

you

and

Maci (21:34)

And those are the exact same conversations people are having. They talk about stepping into a place and feeling something that's channeled or beyond them. And I think it's important to have more of that conversation because we're talking about how it impacts people. And another time I had that feeling was in Thailand.

Going to the temples there does definitely have a sacredness to me and one of the temples is halfway up a mountain in Chiang Mai and you wouldn't know it was there. You can only really walk there and I stumbled upon it by accident and it was

one of the most magical experiences of my life and it was that same, there is something here that I've never seen and never felt before

Caressa Joyce (22:09)

experience

Maci (22:15)

while we talk about like some people might resonate with this like energetic spiritual side. There's some people who might not and they're more on like the scientific side. So in both of those, I think the language about energy exists because you have the spiritual, I feel like I'm being influenced by something beyond and bigger than me

Caressa Joyce (22:31)

Yeah.

Maci (22:31)

versus like the scientific, which could be you are witnessing and observing things that your mind has not been exposed to before. Therefore, it is rewiring itself to make meaning and make sense out of what's being observed here.

So I think both things exist, whether what kind of language you use to talk about it, but I'm glad you brought up the idea of energy in space. And then also I was really sad to hear about the strip mall taking over

your landscape as a child and your creeks and all that, because that is also something that's designed, right? It's a choice. It's a choice in how we've decided people will interact with space.

Caressa Joyce (23:09)

we can take this moment to sort of honor the passing of that beautiful landscape, that natural landscape.

Maci (23:12)

Yeah. Yeah.

Caressa Joyce (23:17)

And, you know, as I grew older and my friends and I got our driver's licenses, we were able to go farther. And I feel like that's what really helped me discover our beautiful Metro parks. And so there's, it's not like it's all gone, I guess is what I'm saying. It's there are still wonderful places around here to visit. Even though some have passed.

Maci (23:30)

Mm.

Yeah.

Yes, they definitely are.

Definitely are. But yeah, some have lost some we won't, you know, we won't see again. But some are coming back to in a weird way. My friend just told me about our sewer district doing flood buyouts. So they'll buy the homes that are in floodplains. They'll like study it and then they'll raze the building that's on it, the structure and let the land grow back Yeah.

Yeah, I was like, I don't know this effort and I want to do more research on it. But yeah, so that it's ever changing. It's like all dynamic is an important note that permanent doesn't always seem so permanent, I think is another lesson to take from this. I'll talk about my origin story a little bit because it was really inspired by the fact that you did use your parents and I like that as a jumping off point. So like my from my mom.

Caressa Joyce (24:20)

Yes, please.

Maci (24:29)

I learned generosity. Like generosity being initial response for a lot of problems or issues that come up. And not monetarily, it's more like time and sharing meals together with people, inviting people. So that kind of generosity, this like, maybe it's even energetic generosity as a way to test your limits too when you think you can't do something to try to get like if it's in service of something else, like how does that, how does that feel when you try to be generous first? And then my dad, I think he,

he showed me, which is I think really beautiful for like a male figure in my life, showed me softness. He was like the first person to show me softness.

Caressa Joyce (25:12)

Hmm.

Maci (25:19)

and vulnerability.

You know, like if I was crying, he would cry with me. and I hope he's not embarrassed. He does listen to this every once in a while, but okay. Too late now. This is who you raised. I feel like that has guided me. And yeah, it has led me to places where I've been taken advantage of or I don't know, because I don't know any better.

Caressa Joyce (25:28)

Yeah.

This is where I'm going to be.

Maci (25:43)

that I will still choose to be generous first. And I've learned how to discern, but like being generous and being open and vulnerable, all those things are how I approach a lot of situations. And like you had talked about the capacity of having the ability to do that. I know people who do struggle with that and being able to say like there's space here, like within our connection and our conversation.

Caressa Joyce (25:45)

So, I'm going to show some of the various parts of the national ice hockey team that's here. we're doing some of the important things for you all. All these things are going to be a cultural ice hockey team. So, I'm to talk about the diversity of hockey, the achieving the goal of hockey.

Maci (26:07)

But I think, like, so I've started off from a very open place. I think my origin story is that. And then there's a second origin story that comes along with my autism diagnosis and my son's autism diagnosis, where having the generosity and the openness and the capacity built in already helped us like,

Caressa Joyce (26:22)

I would be interested in the policy of the United States,

the policy of the States, for the to participate. So, I interested this. I would interested in this. I would this. I

Maci (26:25)

be on this really wonderful path to acceptance. So, so though I think that's my origin story. And then when it comes to landscape, always being most connected there.

But I realized that

Yes, because of the way my brain is operating, I feel everything. And I feel a lot more than maybe the typical person. And that goes along with not just the senses, but also with time. Like time passes differently for me or the way I perceive it, because I feel every moment and I can't escape it. And so when I'm out in

nature, I get to enjoy, I use all of that.

Caressa Joyce (27:03)

I'm

Maci (27:06)

to my benefit, right? Like get to see all the plants, I get to feel everything there, and that makes me feel really connected in a way that I start to understand as I've gotten older isn't necessarily common for everyone, but not inaccessible. It's like once I start talking about it, then people are like, yeah, I can do that too, but I do think that because

I feel things so differently that...

I can highlight things for people. So that's sort of that origin story for me and where we are now.

Caressa Joyce (27:39)

Yes, I definitely recognize that in you. Not only your acceptance of like what life brings you, who you are, why you're here in this space, but I think that shows and you hold that really well for other people too. Like you accept yourself and I feel like

Other people feel really accepted by you and it's nice to be around you.

Maci (27:59)

That's so sweet to say!

I wonder if you think that kind of answer is part of the question that follows up. I mean, I have another answer for that one too, but the like, is a who or what is a part of your lineage? And the

fact that you already use parents was so great, but I know you also mentioned some teachers and I would love to hear what you think about that question. So, what's a part of your lineage?

Caressa Joyce (28:16)

Mm-hmm.

Yeah, okay, so

some of my teachers have been. Here's my list, you ready? I have to say my first teacher is Lilacs because Lilacs are, like I was saying, with turning on the senses, it's, when I think about my senses and connecting to the land, I think so much about my grandmother and how Lilacs were growing outside of her house. And when we first looked at,

Maci (28:25)

I hope you have a list. Yeah.

Caressa Joyce (28:50)

The house that we live in now, my family and I, I noticed there were lilacs in the same place that they were just to the left of the garage as at my grandmother's house. And when I think of everything that I love about spring, I can find that in the scent of lilacs and their shape and their color. So I just feel like they've taught me how to connect to...

my family to this place where I live, to the season of spring that I love. And yeah, they've just, they've held a lot for me. And then yes, my teacher Margot Miltich and her husband Bill teach yoga and yoga philosophy. And she's been my teacher since 1998. She was the officiant of my wedding and she, you know, she taught me Jinshin, which is an energy.

practice that is similar to Reiki. And then after Margo, with my 200 hour yoga teacher training, I went to teach, or I went to a teacher training out in San Francisco with a woman named Joy Rebelli. And she has been a wonderful teacher to me of how to really be honest when I'm speaking and to really be true to myself and to ask myself hard questions without shying away from them. So I feel like

That's something that I would like to offer people too. And in this lineage too, when I was thinking about like who's in my lineage, it's not just my teachers, but what I received through their teaching that I want to carry forth into the world too. So that it's like I'm part of that line. I'm part of that continuation of wisdom. Also for teaching me hope, red tail talks, whenever I feel like I'm like lost or

I don't know what I'm gonna do or what comes next. If I look up and I see a red tail talk, I'm like, okay, we're good. I got this. It's all gonna be all right. And otters for playfulness and deer for kindness and for that connection to my mom. As far as authors go, so many, but I would say Alice Walker and Alice Hoffman have been very influential to me in just understanding.

Maci (30:48)
you

Caressa Joyce (30:57)
the human condition and how we relate to the natural world, especially Alice Hoffman.

My teacher more recently of ceremony is Paloma Cervantes and she is a Corundisma and she originally lived in Mexico now. She's in California. Maybe she's back in Mexico now, but she taught me to hold reverence and how to, um, how to offer in service and gratitude reverence to the directions and the guardians of the directions and the elements and how to sort of, I mean, it was always creating altars as I have been for.

I don't even know, three decades maybe, but she really helped me to hone in on the meaning, the deeper understanding and meaning of where I place what and how I can hold so much symbolism. Gosh, so many other people I feel like are part of my lineage, but for right now, I'll just leave it with those people. Actually, no, one more.

Maci (31:50)
That's so beautiful. one more. Go for it.

Caressa Joyce (31:55)
She has a wonderful podcast called Belonging and a book too called Root and Ritual. And she has really helped me to honor the seasons and live cyclically even more. so yeah, give lots of props to her. And Catherine Fink is another great podcaster. She has a podcast called The Heart of the Cauldron, although it's not happening anymore, it's not ongoing, but that was a really great one. And for Somatic Coaching.

Luis Mojica is a great teacher and Rachel Maddox as well and my teachers for somatic coaching. So yeah.

Maci (32:30)
thank you. You give so many resources and places to look and like dig deeper and I really appreciate that. So I look forward to listening back and actually if you have that list and you could send it over that way I can put it in the show notes. That would be perfect. That I love and appreciate that you've been intentional about this for so long.

Caressa Joyce (32:31)
Thank you.

I will text it to you right now.

Maci (32:50)
And to me it shows, right? So that way you are able to distill where you're learning from and how. And I feel like I'm on the opposite end where I'm still just gathering so much information

from everywhere that I still feel very open about who my teachers have been and who are to come. A lot of it for me has been my friends and my family in a lot of ways.

in nature a lot of times. I have yet to come across an issue in my life that could not be modeled in landscape. That's my personal view when it comes to almost anything. I talk about gardens a lot because I think there's this beauty in how you

Caressa Joyce (33:31)
you

Maci (33:42)
are intentionally creating something in a space for you to observe and watch, and that you've planned, yet are simultaneously understanding that you don't have control. And I feel like that's a wonderful philosophy about life, and that there's so many things that go on in the garden that you have no idea what's happening. You know, you have no idea what's happening below, and you respond to the signals that you can observe.

Caressa Joyce (34:04)
Yeah.

Maci (34:09)
And sometimes you do that without guilt and you go, that's what the problem is. Okay, let me, I'll know better for next time. Or if this happens again, I'll know why. so the landscape is my teacher.

in a big way. But a part of my lineage, I think I took that question literally, and I think about my family again. And my grandfather, who wasn't from Cleveland, he was from Sherman, Texas, but he settled in Cleveland, and he became a big part of the Lee Harvard community, and was a community leader there. And while he never went into politics at all, but he remained a part of...

Caressa Joyce (34:32)
you

Hmm.

and maybe for a reason. I would just say that your means of
sharing thoughts, which you don't.

Maci (34:49)
the neighborhood and like being a part

of those people. And I remember community meetings being held in his living room, you know, it was like much less formal and having these people express their feelings and their thoughts

about things. And sometimes they were heard, sometimes they weren't, right? Just like kind of observing all the things that happen, all those dynamics was a big part of teaching me how differently things go oftentimes.

than what you maybe expected. But also this idea of being a civic servant to a certain degree, not necessarily

through jobs, but through the work that you do, the uncompensated work, the care work that you do for others was demonstrated that way. I think there's a lot more communalness.

Caressa Joyce (35:24)

So,

Maci (35:34)

I think there's something about that where like keeping truths and helping people express their truths has been a part of my family lineage for a long time.

Caressa Joyce (35:35)

community. If there's something about that, really keeping track and not giving it too much interest, it's being a part of learning. It's not a number of things for

Maci (35:45)

And I think, I think a lot of the work we do, even as a family is centered around that.

Caressa Joyce (35:46)

Yeah.

Maci (35:50)

And so for me, that's the lineage I hold. at the same time, I feel like I talk in bibliographies a lot, not so much in this conversation, but a lot in my life. And so I actually created a I have a spreadsheet of all the books that I read. But I do have an inclusivity reading list on my website that I put up of for designers. Yeah. Just to say, like, these are some books that I know have helped me shift my perspective.

Caressa Joyce (36:05)

Hmm.

need to check that out.

give such big props to you for keeping a bibliography of the running list of all the books. This is what I've always wanted to do and dreamed of and thought in the past like, I should have done that years ago. And so I haven't started because I feel like, I should have already done it. But now I'm inspired.

Maci (36:33)

maybe the library is all of us too, hearing what you said. Yeah, we're walking libraries. Okay. And then,

Caressa Joyce (36:36)

Yes, walking libraries.

Maci (36:41)

Again, not the most delicate of segues for me, but I know we have two more questions. But one of them was about what are some of the earth based practices that that you do to get connected to get grounded or the purposes that you have for them, whatever they are.

Caressa Joyce (36:47)

Mm-hmm.

Yeah. So, gosh, I would say the one that I practice the most is drinking herbal tea. That's something that I do all the time throughout the day, into the night, throughout the night to help me sleep. I have my kids drinking tea. And so it really helps me to connect to the earth in that if it's late summer and I'm feeling that

Maci (37:10)

You

Caressa Joyce (37:21)

hay fever come on, the first thing I do is I go to my cupboard where I've got this wonderful tea that is a mix of wild mint and white sage and it just helps my sinuses so much. Also, licorice seems to help to heat things up in there too. And then, yeah, well, I'm not gonna go into all the different herbs that I love and their reasons, but drinking herbal tea.

Maci (37:42)

Oh yes, we don't have time, that's a different podcast.

Caressa Joyce (37:47)

is one way that I definitely feel like I connect to the earth and the seasons and to my body. And then having an herbal garden and flower garden, I really want to have a garden that's a fruit garden. It hasn't taken off so much in the last few years, but I would love to be able to feed myself and my family with a garden that I've cultivated. But let's see, what else? I would say intention setting too.

guess what I'm doing right now is to set that intention to have a fruit garden along with the flower garden. I definitely do a lot of meditation when I'm surrounded by plants and outside in the garden and walking and hiking. And then I also really love to talk to my plants and to animals. I feel like that helps me to stay connected and yeah, honoring the earth, honoring my kindred.

other souls out there, non-human,

Maci (38:40)

Thank you. I we both definitely drink a lot of That's how what brought us together. Yes, tea practice something that I do all the time, but you'd mentioned the like talking to the plants. So I don't talk to my plants as much. But when I go into the forest, we are having a conversation. The forest hears all of my personal tea. And I am like very intentional about that because

Caressa Joyce (38:45)

Mm-hmm.

Maci (39:05)

Again, I don't feel like there's ever been a situation where I can't find a solution in the landscape or some modeled experience in the landscape. And I like get out there and I'm like, you've seen so much that my problems, while real to me, might seem small to you. And I just need to know that. Like I need to know that what I'm feeling can be held by something bigger so that it's not all on me.

Caressa Joyce (39:19)

Hmm.

Yes.

Maci (39:31)

And so I am, therefore, I tend to be my happiest and lightest and like brightest self during the, like during the more warmer seasons. That doesn't mean I don't go out in the winter. I still do quite a bit, but it's not the same. And it doesn't feel the same trying to go on an urban walk, like a walk in downtown Cleveland or something, and then, and having that same feeling.

Caressa Joyce (39:42)

Mm-hmm.

Right.

Maci (39:57)

doesn't connect as well for me. So I make it really intentional to, I'll use my car, drive further out, go to the metro parks, and then the land and I will have a conversation. Yeah, and I'm realizing, I'm like, yeah, I know that you get that. And I'm like, I wonder how some people listening to this will respond to that. But I think it's okay. I like being weird, and I've never, and it's not even weird to me. Like, we are two people who are on,

Caressa Joyce (40:04)

you

Yeah.

Right.

Maci (40:24)

It's like, I just think it's fascinating to me that the more of me I become, the more I'm fitting a stereotype of strange or weird from when I was younger. And I'm like, good. Now I feel, this feels right. I feel like there's a lot of effort being put into not becoming whatever that stereotype was. And here I am, arrived in that and I love it. So.

Caressa Joyce (40:36)

Mm-hmm.

Yes, I agree. I'm on board with that with you. Yes.

Maci (40:56)

Okay, so then, yeah, what do you wish everyone knew or practiced to help humanity and Mother Earth? And I will probably answer this more from a professional lens, just to offer that for landscape architects who are listening, but I would like you to answer it however you feel.

Caressa Joyce (41:06)

Mm-hmm.

I think it kind of ties into what we were just talking about, talking to plants, talking to animals. I wish that everyone knew that we are not at the center or at the apex of some hierarchy of living beings, that animals and plants are our kin and that their lives are as equally as important as ours. So that, like talking to them, I think people will get it if they have a garden because gardeners know that when you're out there and thinking like,

Hmm plant, do you need more light? I move you? Should I like give you some more water? If you really listen, your plants gonna tell you and maybe it doesn't tell you right then, but maybe as you're washing the dishes later, you're like, my peonies do need more water or whatever it is. Because there is a conversation happening. You care about them. And I think that the earth cares about us. And I think that when we cut off that connection and feel so separate that that's where.

all of these problems arise from because we feel we need to fill that void with something consumable. When really it's reciprocity that is happening, that is available, we can give back to the earth, the earth can give back to us. And it's not all extractive, but it's a give and take. So I think that when we start a conversation, then we can start this relationship and we can then just grow so much.

And our daily practices and habits and actions can shift in a healthier direction when we embody this. I think so much too about times before, like the industrial revolution when we had to live so

close to the land and our lives, our children's lives, everything was so tied into what was happening seasonally and with the weather and with our food supply. And then when we cut off from that and we cut off from our connection to the earth,

Like I said, yeah, we just, it's almost like being an orphan. You you just, you feel like, okay, now I'm on my own and I have to pull myself up on my bootstraps and then if it's all on me, then I have to do anything to survive, right? But if we get out of that mindset and just think, really, the earth is here to help us. And if we think too, if we can kind of get past the hump of like,

feeling guilt or shame about what has happened and what humanity has done to the earth, we can think about how it's not too late and that we are really here. Like our purpose is to help everything to grow. Like I think originally there was just so much more conversation with the land and with plants and with animals. And that's how we got as far as we did. But we can come back to that and we can help heal.

And I think that maybe this whole descent into, I don't know, how to describe the chaos of climate catastrophe that we are in right now, but maybe that's all part of the story. Maybe it's not like, no, everything has gone awry. Maybe it's like, I mean, it is, it's happening. It's really happening. So it is part of the story and that it's not over, but this is just a chapter in the.

future chapters, we come back around to our connection. And we had to go through this so that we could have an even deeper appreciation of what we have almost lost.

Maci (44:28)

I love that. when we're designing places, we do have a story. We may not acknowledge it in that way. We may not know what we're telling but I would invite us, I wish people would investigate their stories more, or collect new ones, because that is...

how it shapes your perspective. So if you're telling yourself a story about what this design needs to be, that's what you're going to execute. Like that's what you're going to put out into the world. And it gets built in a very big way. And it starts with the intention of why it's being built.

Caressa Joyce (44:57)

There is something else that is important to me. It's actually a very

Maci (45:01)

so for me, when I talk about stories, I'm bringing the stories out into the world, into the public, and I'm doing more public speaking and I'm hosting an event on April 24th at Verbena.

Caressa Joyce (45:02)

about the sanitation and the other stories and the other stories that I've heard from somebody who may have the area or will see the same things. I think it's a very and area for everybody.

Maci (45:15)

the non-alcoholic shop that we mentioned earlier, and it's going to be a storytelling event. I'm gonna be bringing in friends and myself to share stories that are

Caressa Joyce (45:16)

And I think that's a great opportunity to be here. It's a great opportunity. It's a great opportunity for me and myself to share stories.

Maci (45:24)

different from the ones that we may have been told that come from all around the world, and it's also in honor of celebrating Autism Acceptance Month to celebrate the different ways we think and our brains are made. So if you're in the Cleveland area, I invite you to check that out. But also, if you wanna learn more about what Caressa does and the work that she's been doing,

You have events coming up too, right?

Caressa Joyce (45:46)

Yes, so you can always check out my website which is caressa, C-A-R-E-S-S-A, Joy Centered Life.

And yeah, I've got a list of all upcoming events. There is a tea ceremony at Verbena coming up on Sunday, April 27th from three to five. Then there's a really fun event that's going to come up at the Botanical Gardens and that's May 4th. It's a tea ceremony as well from two to four. It's right now. It's sold out, but there's a wait list and then hopefully we will have other events coming up there.

as well. And then at Abide Yoga, which is a yoga studio that we both love, there are two locations. There's one on the east side on Larchmere and one on the west side on Detroit. And then this will be at the one on Detroit in Lakewood. And it's the Universal Mother retreat. So it's going to involve yoga and a flower bar, which is where you can pick out your own specific

flower that you want to use to decorate the altar. We'll have vocalizations, we'll have meditation and journaling and Reiki. So it'll be a really lovely event that's going to be right before Mother's Day. And so yeah, we have our events at Verbena once every six weeks to honor the solstices, the equinoxes and the cross-quarter days. And then if anyone wants to learn more about

how to create their own practice of marking the seasons in a more sacred and ceremonial and intentional way. I love to talk about it. So please feel free to get a hold of me. And yeah, I think that's about it for right now.

Maci (47:31)

Thank you so much for having this

conversation with us.

Caressa Joyce (47:35)

Yeah, thank you. This has been lovely.

Maci Nelson (47:45)

Thank you again, Caressa, for joining us today. I hope you all enjoyed the conversation. If you have questions, feel free to reach out. You can email me at thelandscapenerd@gmail.com. You can also find me on Instagram at [thelandscapenerd](https://www.instagram.com/thelandscapenerd). I also put a lot more information, like show notes and updates on events, on my website, thelandscapenerd.com.

I would really, really love it if you just send a message to say hi, or if you have time to review the podcast or leave a comment. Those things mean the world and make a huge difference for a tiny little podcast like ours to reach more and more people. The more nerds, the better. Anyways, thank you for listening. It's been a pleasure. Happy nerding out, and I will talk to you soon. Goodbye.