

Valerie Nieman

## **Given Half a Chance**

The Autumn Glory sedum failed to redden,  
planted too deep in shade;

what light's let in by the shedding  
maple is too late, too thin.

Now what made the summer garden  
will have to stay: lank lilies, massed ranks

of Marvel-of-Peru, sun-drops overrun  
by roses, chance plants from the farmers' market

not always true to name. Late sun  
casts long fingers of warning:

what's too deep-rooted, mis-chosen,  
invasive, choked or choking

must stay for winter,  
no more planting, now,

no more lifting or dividing.  
Still, this afternoon

I carried home through blowing leaves  
a willow in a bucket.