

*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian*

## The language of trees

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*A beautiful birdhouse nestled next to the heavenly bamboo attracts residents for spring.*



*Loquat fruit and wisteria form a bond.*

*Photos Cynthia Brian*

Several scientists have countered that plants and trees do not possess intelligence and are instead genetically programmed by natural selection to do a job automatically.

Being the nature aficionado that I am, I vote for team Simard and Wohleben. Over the past few years I've been carefully studying my hillside pine trees as they twist to be closer to each other. Although each tree was originally planted to give a wide berth for each

canopy to grow straight and tall in an effort to reach optimum sunlight, as the trees matured they tended to gravitate toward one another, mingling their branches. The pine that was planted furthest away from its siblings actually lurched sideways forming an arch until its branches touched the closest pine. I can't help but think that this small group considers itself a forest family or at least very dear friends. When my "mother" Japanese maple leafs out, the other two develop their

leaves within two days. My fruit trees of the same species always bloom together as if on orchestral cue. The willows in the creek appear to be supporting the oaks and bays with a communal sharing of resources.

Simard detects a spiritual expression in the forest and Wohleben has been accused of being a tree hugger, although he states that he doesn't believe trees respond to human hugs.

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