

trees' small leaves turn towards the sun as though a novel discovery, waving and dancing in the breeze and adoring the sun. Then, slowly, the leaves started to curl and dry up. "No, no," I complained in dismay. "Do you need more water?" I anxiously watered some more. I fussed about their base with extra mulch, ensuring the support stayed secure. I caressed their tender leaf ends and insisted they reconsider. They ignored me. The leaves continued to curl, then drop off. I talked to them, sang to them and tried therapeutic touch on their skinny branches, trying to stimulate growth. Greyish fungi started to grow nearby on the lawn in circular patches, approaching the trees. I read that the network of fungi underneath trees connected them to each other, and that this network somehow provided nourishment. Additionally, we learned that offshoots of trees were often still attached to the "mother" tree and that, by pulling away these "baby" trees prematurely, they often died. I didn't want to think about that. Hadn't we brought them to a better future on my lawn?

A few weeks later, a movement on one of the maple trees caught my eye. Incredibly, some tight green pips had appeared on the ends of the trees' branches. Over the coming days, vibrant green tiny leaves started to shyly form and welcome the summer sunshine. What brought the little maples back to life? Were they just emerging from a dormant stage? The extra water and sun? My singing and dancing routines around them? The vibrational-energy therapy? The fungi?

By fall, the other trees started to drop their leaves. Were they communicating with our maples, telling them to do the same? Had the fungi connected them? If they didn't make it through winter, then what? Back to that enchanted forest?

The promise of free maples curiously no longer entices Allan or me. Or, we could go to the local nursery in the spring. We would just have to pick the trees out and get them home. I mean, how hard could that be?

Postscript: I'm happy to say that two of the three maples did survive their first winter and I didn't have to resort to going to the nursery for more—at least, not yet! ■

