In some Native languages the term for plants translates to "those who take care of us." --Robin Wall Kimmerer

A Prickly Pear History Lesson

"Summer monsoons in the Southwestern Sonoran Desert produce a wild bounty of crimson fruit. Rising from Engelmann's prickly pear cacti (Opuntia engelmannii), these fruits, or tuna in Spanish, perch atop Mickey Mouse-shaped pads like ruby crowns. Against muted browns and greens of the desert, the tuna are eye-popping. When I landed in Tucson for graduate school more than thirty years ago, I was amazed to learn the spine-covered fruits were edible. I sent store-bought prickly pear jelly back home to midwestern friends for the holidays, its dazzling pink hue a cheeky reminder of the deserts December sunshine. I knew, though, that with enough determination, I could put up my own preserves from foraged fruit just as my Kansas grandmother had canned foods from her garden. When I realized I wasn't moving after a decade of desert living, I decided to see if harvesting prickly pear fruit could connect me to the native foodways of my adopted home." More in this essay by Lisa K. Harris.

Be The Change:

Reflect on a plant or tree that connects you to the place you grew up in. What does it signify to you?