

## Before the First Freeze

The marine layer crawled in sometime during the night, a surprise.  
Our fall garden sighed ☹️ tired of the heat, the weight of its own  
sun-hungry blooms held back so long by spring's late, hard freeze.

Foliage gone leggy with weeks of summer growth, prolonged flowering  
gave up its high-summer sheen ☹️ too much sun sipped, and sipped.  
A second crop of tiny red strawberries ripens, and the last pears

too high to pick, fall ☹️ their yellow rot sweetens the air. Apples  
resist a tug. We leave them there, postponing pies and applesauce.  
Purple, yellow, white – the dahlias persist, the last new buds

promise wet October blooms. A fire on the peninsula, miles across  
the sound from us, leaves a faint, smoky smell in the air, smears  
the sky lit by a low-hanging sun. Long, thin shadows drape the worn-out

landscape, in which my love and I stand close, attuned to lingering  
charms, abundances, slanted sun through yellow leaves.

©Diana Elser 2016

*This is a classic nature poem, descriptive of a fall landscape (our backyard), and of course, it draws the parallel between a garden waning into winter, and two humans who have moved into the autumn of their lives.*