

In a Greenhouse

David Wagoner

Nurserymen tell us trees
 grown under glass
 in the calm of a greenhouse
 are spindlier, their trunks
 more modest, more inclined
 to bend under the burdens
 of new branches and leaves,
 their ordinarily haphazard
 outgrowth unbalanced
 in the direction of sunlight
 exclusively, taking no part
 in the play of weather
 outside the windows. Inside,
 trees that have grown accustomed
 to constant temperature
 and easygoing air
 become much less sturdy
 than wild ones subjected
 to sudden changes, surprises
 of much too much, too little
 or too late. Yet their caretakers
 behind glass have discovered
 if they hold the privileged ones
 in hand and shake them,
 shake them, even pound them
 with padded mallets, they straighten,
 stiffen, and grow tall.