

What a Gardener Needs

You need patience to garden,
says the woman in the newspaper.

After these eight years,
do I have the patience
to nurture our ailing plant?

Even with more effort,
it might never branch out,
never open new leaves to the sun?

How long did I tend our mandarin?
Six, seven years? Only this winter
did it birth two perfect fruit.

Will more arrive next January?
Were those two orange globes
a sign to remain faithful to our duties?

I could water and feed a lifetime,
not knowing—or worse, knowing all along.

What is missing this season?

Here's what I now remember:

When I lifted the mandarin from its pot,
placed it in a space out front,
I believed in its desire to grow.

—THEREST McCOURT