**They Stop the Seasons**

Laurel Benjamin

When the neighbors start drinking

at their move-in party, tight clusters of laughter

pushed at the beginning of the pandemic, I cover

myself in gingko leaves, bunches of yellow triangles

wet from a hose in a dry season. I squint

through our yard— a cutout to stark naked trunks

frozen against a black background, purple floor.

Corridor of time when Japanese settled here,

left behind silkworms and indigo for greenhouses.

And past that shattered-glass era, low fences topped

with little roofs remain along with trees, thread of blood

in the yellow from when they were taken

to local racetracks and then to the camps.

And our neighbors. We wonder if, in the pile of corpses

outside hospital landings as deaths mount,

will they be next? Then they get sick.

Recover in a few days. Cut down the two trees

in their yard that took 50 years to mature.

Stop the lemons, the yucca with its brusque trunk

and feather flowers, the undulating harvests,

the seasons.