Water the Babies

It's so bucolic I take a photograph.
The kids, 2 and 4, soon-to-be 3 and 5.
Him with his peach, her with her plum.
They help drag out roots and heave rocks.
They peer into the hole they just helped dad dig.
They wear oshkoshes and galoshes.
They have cherub curls and blueberry stained cheeks.
Who needs preschool when we have this?
It's actually Arbor day and we are actually planting trees. Twelve of them.
We are making sure they're straight,
throwing compost and manure into the hole.
Using plastic snow shovels to push the soil back
then patting it down with our chilly palms.
There are bright blue skies and marshmallow clouds.
The forsythia is bursting, and my god
how much happier the plum seems
now that she's out of her bucket.

It's so tragic I won't take a photograph.
Of how the shovel becomes a weapon
Of how they bicker over who gets the blue one.
The little guy tantrums and whines
desperate to watch another movie.
They haven't been kissed by their grandparents.
Their bosom buddies are barricaded
down the block, while their parents squander too many hours peering into screens
reading scientific studies of uncertainty.

Along the red fence, a peach a plum
a peach a plum a peach a cherry
a peach. And in the back, honey crisp
fuji, gravenstein, and the grand pollinator
granny smith (my beloved fruit — tart
crisp, old-soulish). Still to come,
ever-green Anjou, and that lush
thin-skinned Bartlett.

By mother's day, there are fuzzy donut peaches
the size of a quarters and heaps of hard green cherries
the size and look of coffee berries.
So long as we ward off the peach leaf curl
we will have fruit for our august ice cream.

Whatever happens, we do this:
we wake, eat breakfast, get dressed
brush our teeth.

We go outside.

We water the babies.