

4/April/Feel the Magic
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Feel the magic of spring? It's everywhere. The Lenten rose, in deep pinkish purple bloom, nods in the breeze. The euphorbia is coming to life in its' daring shades of chartreuse. Outside the low windows of St. Catherine's Episcopal Church in the middle of the sermon, I see a flash of orange, a Varied Thrush, taking a drink from the pond; a pair of baby ducks swim midst the soft rain in the pooled water surrounded by lush green lawn where robins search for worms. The water's reflection in the sunlight dances off the walls and ceiling of the church. On the way home, I observe with a chuckle that the cows have gotten out at a dairy farm on North Fork Road. It's a Rockwell painting-- black and white cows munching away on the front lawn of the home next to their pasture. A big old bull the size of a small truck meanders in front of our car bringing us to an abrupt halt.

We're fortunate to live in the magic of Oregon, a "tree" state. One of the things I like best about our state is the diverse forests and beautiful trees. Oregon, whose state tree is the Douglas fir, has some of the most productive forests and is home to some of the largest trees in the world. These trees affect our quality of life by providing habitat for wildlife, products that we all use, clean air and water. In Oregon, instead of recognizing just one day as Arbor Day, we set aside the first full week of April as Arbor Week. If you join the Arbor Day Foundation, you can get ten free trees. Last year, members of the Arbor Foundation planted over 8.5 million trees! Check it out at www.arborday.org. Conservationist Aldo Leopold made it all so simple when he said: "Acts of creation are ordinarily reserved for gods and poets. To plant a pine, one need only own a shovel."

Planting trees is something we can do in honor of Earth Day, which is April 22. Created in 1970 in recognition of our responsibility for stewardship of the earth and now celebrated annually around the globe, Earth Day serves as a reminder of how to be good caretakers of our planet. We've seen the impact of global warming and its effects including a rise in air and sea temperatures and extreme weather patterns. Now, more than ever, it is our responsibility to bring about change, especially for future generations. Spring, a time of new beginnings, renewal and rebirth is a great time to ask ourselves what we do to make a difference. Do we recycle? Do we continually look for alternatives to pesticides? Do we take reusable bags to the market? Shop locally? Reduce the amount of garbage we create? How do we care for our lawns and yards? Do we look for water efficient products and services? Are we making our homes more energy efficient?

After the long tumultuous days of winter, those of us who live at the edge of the earth on the western coast of our continent are ready to come out into the sun and play. Everywhere I look, I see color—periwinkle under the old growth stump, golden daffodils marching up the driveway. Creamy white trillium meander up the hill from the creek. If picked, trillium may die or take years to recover, and it's illegal to pick them in Oregon, so I enjoy them from afar. Hot pink hyacinths and orange tulips explode next to ruby red azaleas and early blooming peach rhodies. The evergreen clematis is wild with white blooms covering the pump house. English daisy and dandelion creep up near the front steps. Lewisia waves a pale pink greeting from its perch near the front door. The primroses, ever valiant in their persistence nod their brightly colored heads in the window box. Another season rolls in, and, if we're paying attention, we feel the magic.

*Balden's essay, "Glimpses of Small Town Life, was one of nine selected entries read at the third annual Cannon Beach Writes! event on April 12. Her essay, "Traffic Report from the Mountain" was selected for publication in the 2008 edition of RAIN Magazine. Both essays were originally published as columns in the North Coast Citizen. Balden can be reached at gail@creativejourneys.net.