

## Seedtime

Gail Balden's column for  
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Is the world falling apart? It feels that way. Worry doesn't help. We all know that's a useless emotion. What to do? Gardening is a perfect tonic for dealing with uncertain times. All that weeding out, planting and growth can be a balm to our spirits. Peace and serenity live in the garden. Riding on trains is another joy. Riding the MAX light rail train to the Oregon Convention Center for the Yard, Garden and Patio show reminded me why most of us love trains, buses and streetcars. We're all jumbled together in one big hodgepodge of humanity. We need this togetherness now, even if our only sense of connection is that we're all in this together. Spring-cleaning can be a tonic too. There's something calming about putting our house in order whether it's cleaning the windows so we can see clearly or having the courage to clean up our finances so we know where we stand.

Each day I take a stroll around the yard just to see what's happening. I look for surprises. Even though the garden appears brown and dead, more is going on there than appears. The alders and maples remain leafless and dormant, but buds are swelling on the camellia and lilac. I see new growth coming along on the clematis, honeysuckle shoots climbing up the west wall and a hydrangea that I thought for sure was a goner coming back to life. The charming cream and pink speckled hellebores are in bloom. Purple vinca and crocus catch my eye under the redwood. On the first day of March, after a snowstorm, I pick a bouquet of sprightly daffodils, a sprig of forsythia, and azure blue pulmonaria, all decked out with white sprinkles on their leaves.

At the yard and garden show, abundant life is everywhere. It's just what I need in the midst of today's bad news and despair--bunches of pussy willows, tulips, vibrant displays of flowering shrubs, exotic banana plants, demo gardens with lush waterfalls and gazebos. Armed with a new book on square foot gardening, bunches of seed packets with unusual names like Bull's Blood beets, Renegade bush beans, Paris Market carrots, and lecture notes from Ed Hume on year-round vegetable gardening, I climb back on the Max train, full of hope for the future. Planting seeds, growing a garden helps replenish the earth and replenishes me. Daylight savings time has begun, and let's hope by the end of the month the average daily temperature will be higher than it was at the beginning.

Spring migration is beginning too. Soon the hummingbirds return. The smallest warm-blooded creature and nature's smallest birds, they're a miracle in themselves. They're the only birds that can truly hover with tiny wings that flap 20 to 80 times per second. They can fly up and down, backwards and forwards and even upside down and can get up to speeds of 75 miles per hour. Their energy and persistence remind me to keep on keeping on. Woodpeckers are drilling on the side of the house, tapping out their territory in preparation for breeding season. With their large feet, toes that point forward and backward, and claws that cling to vertical structures, they're able to hang upside down and rip holes in the wood with their bills. I know this because they've just finished a demolition project on the west side of my house.

I've ordered window planters, stocked up on potting soil and lined the seed packets up just to dream awhile. It's the seeds that hold the most promise. "To see things in the seed, that is genius," said Lao-tzu, Chinese Taoist philosopher.

It's hard to worry while working in the garden, riding on trains with our sisters and brothers in this life or cleaning the streaks from windows. Uncertainty abounds, but whether it's a seed of possibility we cling to in our President's speech when he assures us

things will get better, or the tiny seed of loose-leaf lettuce called “Revolution” waiting to be planted, within each lies hope. Like the garden, life goes on.

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