

Glimmers of Grace

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Midwest, Southwest, Northwest. That's my life circle. Though I've often received comments from others on the joys of living in near constant sunshine in the Southwest, it's really a small town in the Midwest and another in the Pacific Northwest that hold my heart, one embracing my roots, the other bringing forth buds. The word "roots" is described in the dictionary as "the condition of being settled and of belonging to a particular place." As I prepare to return to my Midwest roots for a class reunion this summer, I'm keenly aware of it being the place where I was settled and from which the rest of my life evolved bringing me 48 years later to a life on the wild Oregon coast.

In the Midwest, nothing was as important as weather--a variety of weather, a change in the weather, unpredictable weather. Weather dominated our conversations and dictated our every move from "head-to-the-basement" tornado watches to muggy summer nights that drove us to the sleeping porch. Crashing thunderstorms sometimes took out the Red maples and howling blizzards kept us cocooned. When we thought we couldn't stand another dreary day of winter, soft gentle rains of spring arrived thawing the last vestiges of dirty winter snow and turning our country roads into muddy flowing rivulets the color of coffee with cream.

Now in what might be considered the winter of my own days, I relish the marking of life by the seasons of the Northwest. On a recent hike up Neahkahnie Mountain I was comforted to see signs of spring, a reminder that the seasons roll around just as they should. Spotting the illusive Western Trillium lily, yellow violets, and pink Fawn lilies is as exciting to me as winning the lottery. At home, tulips I planted last fall emerge from their slumber with long pointy green ears cupping vibrant faces of red and gold. Hummingbirds are back at the feeder, the flicker is at work on his new construction project, and the nuthatches and chickadees flit above the serviceberry. On morning walks the wrens sing their praise song, "Oh, what a beautiful morning." Above, the red-tailed hawk glides, and in the distance, I hear the chorus of Canada geese. At night I hear frogs chattering on the mossy banks of Coal Creek, and sometimes hear the call of the hoot owl. And when the rains come again as we know they surely will, I'll listen to the showers and be grateful for their nourishment of my garden. I agree with writer Emma Goldman who said "I'd rather have roses on my table than diamonds on my neck."

And so it comes again—spring. I'm already planning on the May 8 Nehalem Garden Club sale at the Pine Grove and summer garden tours in the county. On an early spring Master Gardener tour to Portland area nurseries, all of us on the bus came home laden with plants, more plants than passengers. I dreamed of the new members of my plant family taking their place in the garden with the others, plants with regal names like Velvet Amber and Georgia Peach heuchera; the exotic Australian plant, Kangaroo Paw; Ivory Prince hellebore; Crow Feather foam flower. It'd been a wild, blustery day, windy with unstoppable rain. It was so cold that when the bus dropped us off at the first stop earlier that day, my first purchase was a pair of warm gloves and cup of hot coffee. But by the end of the day, satiated with our spring fix, we gardeners were filled with hope for this year's garden. Lulled by the rhythmic flap of windshield wipers as we headed west through driving rain, I listened to bits and pieces of conversations swirling around me:

Nice climbing rose, but won't the deer like it?

Slugs are worse than deer in my garden...

I have too much shade...

I have too much sun...

You need to mulch. There's this place...

I've never had much luck with that plant...

Those dang raccoons dug up my tulip bulbs again...

I think I'll try dahlias this year.

Dahlias—too much trouble...

Glimmers of hope to grace our days--music to my ears.