

What a wonderful time of year spring is!

We have had a steady procession of flowers for over a month now, from the daffodils and crocuses to the lilacs, then the snowball bush, columbines, the wild yellow and pink roses, and now the irises and the Russian olive and locust trees. Our air has been perfumed with sweetness and our eyes have feasted on the lush colors.

The desert, too, is ablaze with wildflowers this year—desert poppies, blue flax, orange globe mallows, yellow lupines, penstemons, and Indian paintbrush are already in bloom along our roadsides and on the desert hills. And just within the past few days the prickly pear cactus has flowered as well in shades ranging from yellow to orange to red.

Our trees, fields, and pond are atwitter with bird activity as well, with birdsong greeting the sunrise and continuing throughout the day and into the night. The meadowlarks start off at first light, their lovely melody carrying through the still air. As the day progresses, we see red-winged blackbirds flying among the cattails at the pond, doves gathering in groups of five or six on the dirt roads, and our faithful insect eaters, the swallows and flycatchers, in flight everywhere.

We seem to have an unusual number of magpies this year. In fact, we even have a magpie nest in the trumpet vine climbing up the Centrum chimney. Since magpies not only rob nests of eggs but of hatchlings as

well, it is not uncommon to look up and see a large magpie being driven away by several much smaller birds determined to protect their nests.

The orchard trees were spectacular this year, filling the air with delicate fragrance and the comforting buzzing of industrious bees. Even though the apricot blooms got nipped by several very cold nights in April, we expect to have a good harvest of apples, pears, and plums.

We especially enjoyed the orchard's spring show as we worked in the adjacent garden area. The upper section of the garden is filled with thriving garlic and onion plants, as well as the usual spring plantings of beets, carrots, lettuce, chard, and various other greens. Neighboring beds contain robust cabbage family members, such as cabbage, Brussels sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower.

Now that Memorial Day is past, we will start setting out peppers, tomatoes and other tender plants that were started indoors in April and have been carefully tended for the past six weeks, and we will direct seed corn, beans, cucumbers and squash. The garden near the Centrum will be planted in special varieties of beans and corn this year. These rows will alternate with the strips of cover crops that will help to enrich that soil with both organic matter and nitrogen.

Each year it is quite wonderful to see the plain brown of the garden soil in early

spring slowly transform into a dynamic community of plants that provides us with an abundant harvest.

While some of the community gardeners were working to get the garden planted, another crew has been finishing work on the new garden shed, which is located along the northwest edge of the garden. It has been leveled, tied down, the porch stabilized, and stairs are now being constructed. A sturdy new gate has been built to provide access between the garden and the new shed.

A great deal of time and energy has gone into remodeling several of our guest facilities, especially in the garden units. Two bathrooms have been repainted and one of them has been completely renovated, along with one of the bedrooms. We are anxious to have this work done by the time seminar arrives in August, since we already have reservations for almost every room on the place.

Sometimes the work that needs to be done here feels overwhelming in its scope. However, it is also true that it is hard to feel bored when there

is much that needs to be done. It is especially satisfying to work with others to complete a task. Whether we are cleaning rooms, mowing fields, fixing fences, repairing and maintaining our buildings, working on proofreading or answering correspondence, we are fortunate that we are able to practice the precept that 'Work is love made visible.'

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