



AROUND THE PLACE

April 2016

As winter moves into spring, each morning the sun rises just a bit further north atop the mountains of the House Range across the valley. It's not easy to see this change from day to day, but when we compare the spot where the sun now rises to where it appeared just a few weeks ago, the difference is clear.

These longer days bring with them so many signs of the return of spring. The lawn in front of the Main House is now a bright green, startling after so many months of lying dormant. The lilac bushes have small but fully formed leaves, and tiny clusters of blossoms are beginning to take shape. The ground around the elm and cottonwood trees is littered with leaf casings as the leaves push their way out into the fresh spring air.

Because the leaves are still so small, the continual bird activity going on among the tree branches is clearly visible. That activity will be somewhat hidden when the leaves are fully formed. Magpies are everywhere, and we hear their hoarse cries as

they fly around adding more sticks to their shaggy nests. Hawks can be seen perching on branches and watching their surroundings closely. Our two pairs of owls sit silently and peer down with unblinking eyes while on the ground robins tug at worms and other small songbirds search for twigs and grasses to help with their nest-building efforts. And of course the ravens seem to be always nearby, in trees, on telephone lines, and scavenging along the roadside.

Looking at our pond in its newly pristine state (i.e., without cattails growing into the pond) brings a feeling of satisfaction. First of all, it is now truly a pond again, and not something between a cattail marsh and a bog. Second, we can really see what is going on down there. Right now three pairs of geese spend a large part of each day swimming, preening, and basking in the sun. If someone walks along the pond shore, they take off in pairs, honking somewhat indignantly, and circle overhead until they feel they are safe enough to settle down

again in the pond as far away from the intruder as possible.

Of course, our various small mammal populations are waking up, too. Jackrabbits and cottontails of all sizes hop around nibbling on the new grass. Mice and moles are scurrying in the orchards and fields (although Mr. Tibbs, Marsha, and Lucy seem to be keeping the rodent population around the Main House well in check), and the gopher population is stirring, too – mounds of fresh dirt bear witness to their spring-time activity.

About two weeks ago the apricot trees, always the first to blossom, began to show a bit of pink. A few days later, we could walk under the apricots in full bloom and enjoy the lovely fragrance that drifted down from each tree. And a few days after that, on a Sunday evening, our lovely spring weather changed in about one hour back to winter. By the next morning seven inches of snow covered the ground! We are hoping that the snow helped insulate the tender blossoms from the freezing cold of the next few nights. Time will tell if we get any apricots this year. Now the plum trees are covered in white buds and the apples and pears are not too far behind.

Our weekly classes continue, with our taped lesson on Sunday and a discussion/editing meeting each Monday afternoon. Residents also meet twice each month to discuss matters relating to daily life here and our buildings and grounds committee-of-the-whole meets once a month to help organize maintenance and outdoor projects.

The community garden group has re-assembled for the coming gardening season. We had a planning session and ordered seeds. The 'nursery crew' has already planted the first trays of seeds – varieties that need a longer growing season, like eggplant, and those that are slow to germinate, like many of the flowers. We have some new gardeners this year who are excited to exercise their green thumbs and fill Home Farm's flower beds and gardens with beautiful splashes of color and lovely fragrances.

The first compost pile of the season was constructed several weeks ago from tree trimmings along with some kitchen refuse. It was shredded, piled up, and watered well. Several days later, the temperature in the pile had climbed above 140 degrees, so the process of turning all that vegetable matter into good soil is well underway.

At this time of renewal and rebirth, a time filled with an upwelling of energy, may the Blessed Ones continue to lead us from darkness into Light.

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