

LAY YOUR PLANS FOR SPRING

February 2020

Spring gardening catalogues usually begin to arrive in late January. For me, they always brought back a flood of memories. It was about this time of the year, when the grey Indiana winters were beginning to get the best of us, that my Father brought out the garden catalogues and began to plan for his spring plantings. I used to laugh at him, as he sat at his makeshift desk with pencil, catalogue, graph paper and dreams in hand. He ignored me, went on dreaming, and planning; and, come summer, the joy of his flowers brought his winter dreams to pass.

His wisdom dawned slowly on me, but, over time, I began to appreciate it. You must lay your plans for spring - early, at a time when spring exists somewhere between a memory and a hope.

Actually, I have come to enjoy winter. When the leaves are gone, the shape and sometimes the history of the land begins to show. The strength and the promise of a tree is more apparent. A full moon on a snow squall, even a winter nor'easter, has a beauty all its own. And, for me, being in the woods on cross country skies or hiking on a mountain in winter is as exhilarating as outdoor life gets. Besides, winter is the only time that I'll ever walk on water!

Be that as it may. A lot of winter is spent inside, cocooning, staying warm, staying healthy, reminiscing, thinking and planning. It's not a bad idea for our lives as well as for our gardens. When times are bleakest and loneliness or hopelessness grips like winter, it is helpful to remember that such seasons pass. That knowledge has a way of putting things in perspective. The light that was born at Christmas just gets brighter to those who are able to look outside themselves to see that, "In the snow and cold of winter, there's a spring that waits to be." [Natalie Sleeth, 'Hymn of Promise']

Like a catalogue for living, our faith is a resource through which we may look with new eyes at God's Creation. Winter has a beauty of its own that can bring us insight, and it can be a time of opportunity. In winter we can pause to reflect on where we have been, what our experience has taught us, how we may prepare for the spring that waits to be. For those who are willing to do the dreaming and the planning, winter will surely lead to a spring of reassuring hope, and beyond that to the summer of a meaningful life filled with the blessings of growth and the bloom of grace.

Got the winter blahs? Find a sunny spot and begin to lay your plans for spring. Concerned about your faith or the direction of your life, or about what's happening in the world, or with people you care about? Find a seed of hope and get ready to plant it, and nurture it carefully, so that once again the flower of joy may bloom.