

Commentary... Of a certain age

Sue Stafford
Columnist

Gardening has always nourished my soul, as have hikes surrounded by the ever-changing landscapes of forest, river, mountain, and desert. Standing dwarfed by tall pine trees is my outdoor cathedral, where Spirit is all around.

Perusal of colorful seed and plant catalogs during the cold winter months fans the flames of my gardener's spirit until I am once again out in the garden, nourishing the soil as well as my soul. And then spring arrives, with warmer days and the unscheduled overnight freeze, to remind us here in Central Oregon we need to be patient, not planting too early.

I love the long hours spent in the garden tidying the perennial beds, pruning, planting, tending, and watering. Daily inspections reveal fresh green sprouts, promising tight buds, a fast-running creek fed by melting mountain snows, and new nests being built in the bird houses around the yard.

With the passage of years,

the hikes have become shorter and the physical tasks of gardening have begun to present challenges, taking longer to complete, and leaving me with fresh aches and stiffness in my hands, back, and knees. Thankfully, what remains unchanged is the rhythm of nature, which only needs to be observed, treasured, and enjoyed.

The daily summer rhythm begins at dawn with the silent morning sunrise, when the golden rosy glow paints the world anew. At the end of the day, the inky starlit sky provides the stage for the consistently waxing and waning moon and offers cover for all the nocturnal creatures who travel unseen.

In between, if we take pause to notice, is the choral background of chirps, tweets, and soothing cooing as birds flit from trees, to creek, to fence. The deer silently pick their way along the creek bed pausing, ears forward in wary alertness, for any approaching danger. The alarm sounded by vigilant neighbor dogs sends them bounding to safety. They will return, to breach

the fencing put up to protect my perennial beds from their repeated forays among tempting tender leaves and luscious buds of promised color.

“My plans now include divesting myself of a life’s worth of accumulation and memories.”

The summer sun crosses over my yard, east to west, flooding my deck in warmth at high noon, and casting lengthening shadows across the yard as it moves toward twilight. The late-afternoon rays set the barberry aflame as they backlight the crimson leaves. And then the sky above the pine trees begins its nightly art exhibit, sometimes painted in pale pastels; other times a raging palette of reds and purples and oranges, each an original breathtaking

creation.

The daily rhythms of nature compound into those seasonal rhythms of rebirth, abundance, harvest, and death. With each passing year, I find myself more keenly attuned to the quicker cycling of the seasons, aware that I am in the autumn of my life, needing to prepare for winter just like I always have as a gardener.

Flowerbeds need to be cleaned out and prepared for their season of sleep. Plants and bulbs are divided and either planted elsewhere in empty spaces or shared with family and friends. Tools are cleaned and stored out of the weather. Tender roots get mulched against approaching freezing temperatures.

During those annual preparations for winter, I now am touched by a sense of nostalgia with memories of the wobbly legged fawns and fledgling chickadees of early summer, who so quickly got their bearings and set off on their own adventures, just as my own little boys found their wings and learned to soar.

My plans now include

divesting myself of a life’s worth of accumulation and memories, reducing the size of my nest, and planning for the inevitable day when the spring full of promise and hope doesn’t arrive; neither do the warm, long days of summer abundance, nor the harvest of autumn plenty.

Each day’s rhythm becomes sweeter and more dear as I feel the kiss of sun on my cheek, and hear the wind teasing the aspen leaves in the back corner of the yard, and see the bushy gray squirrel scampering up the ancient ponderosa, and smell the earthy blend of pine, sage, and warm earth following a summer shower.

Nature’s rhythm is free for my enjoyment. I can’t, nor would I ever want to, control it, although I might want to just slow it down a little. It is Mother Earth’s gift, freely given, and I give thanks every day for her generosity. I only hope that as stewards of her bounty, we will all see the folly of our avarice and destruction, and set about repairing the scars before we are beyond saving.

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Twigs Gallery & Home Goods invites you to enhance your home with products of Oregon artists and artisans.

On display — and available for purchase — this month, is the work of two of Sisters’ favorite artists, Kathy Deggendorfer and Tonye Belinda Phillips, including a wonderful collaborative piece. Kathy’s cards and mugs are also available.

The gallery also features Hot Skwash by Daria, made of real pumpkin or gourd stems and the finest silk velvet; ceramics by Barb Campbell; exclusive hand-crafted glass ornaments by Sisters artist Edie Shelton; Nashelle Jewelry out of Bend; locally crafted purses and much more.



Twigs Gallery & Home Goods is located within Stitchin’ Post on Cascade Avenue. Whether you are looking to enhance your home, or seeking a unique gift, visit Twigs and explore all the color and texture of Oregon-made arts and crafts.

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The Nest

Emily Head has a sense of style and an eye for design that can create a space of beauty and comfort. Emily graduated with a degree in design from BYU and after graduation worked for Neil Kelly in Portland. She has been doing both interior design work and designing and drawing plans for homes for many years.

Working through her design studio, The Nest in Sisters, she brings a unique look, mixing the rustic style that is popular in this area with clean lines and sophistication. Whether you want a real “country” feel or a modern, sophisticated look — or to combine the best of both, The Nest will help you turn your ideas into reality.

The Nest carries beautiful bedding, new lighting choices and beautiful accessories.

They’ll be hosting an open house on Saturday,



June 11, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 413 W. Hood Ave. Stop by and see how The Nest can help you create the lifestyle you desire.