

VILLAGE VIEW

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The season changes once again and none is more welcome than spring. In our climate, it's not that winter's so dreadful nor summer so idyllic, nor even that spring on Cape Cod is really recognizable as a rule. It usually lasts only a week or so, for it's late in arriving and followed so fast by summer we can hardly say we have a spring. Yet its promise fills us with joy.

This past winter was milder than others in recent years, although we've had our nippy days and bitter nights. The ponds were frozen for weeks; in the old days, it would have been a good winter for cutting ice.

We've had our snows. They came later than usual and didn't amount to much. The plows came out a few times, and the sand trucks made their rounds when necessary. We expect wintry weather in January and February, even in March. By the end of January when no snow at all had fallen, we felt fortunate. We also felt it wasn't quite natural and wondered if we'd have a later price to pay.

Now spring is here with all its blessings. The frost is coming from the ground. The earth seems to stir and turn with renewed life. In sunny spots, the crocus pushes through pine needles and bursts into Easter colors. Sprays of forsythia glow with sunshiny abandon.

It may be sloppy underfoot, but it's beautiful overhead. The wind off the Sound is still raw; it chills to the bone if you walk the beach. In a sheltered place out of the wind, the sun's rays warm and comfort all they touch. Jonquils and daffodils are pushing through the earth's surface, their buds fat and swelling.

Birds are coming back; redwing blackbirds are choosing their territory. The robins are bob-bob-bobbing on the grass. The blue jays tweedle mating calls. The early hours of the morning are noisy, this time of year, with birds announcing the dawn.

Evenings, too, are filled with spring-sounds as peepers sing and shrill in the lowlands of swamp and bog. The air feels different than in winter, softer; it smells different, more fertile. And the rains sound different from the splat they made a month ago when they fell on frozen ground. The very puddles behave differently; instead of standing and freezing, they drain, and the mud dries quickly.

Overnight the grass turns from strawcolor to green. A handful of garden soil, squeezed, is still cold but begins to feel alive. All of it is a promise, and all of it is a promise we've been yearning to hear, to see, to feel.

The eternal promise of spring renews our faith; faith renews our hope; and hope renews each living thing upon this planet. With each spring comes rebirth to all the world.

Insects resume their life-cycles; pine trees push forth new candles at each twig-tip; white oaks release those tired brown leaves they've clung to all winter long, as this season's new foliage swells into bud.

Fishes, frogs and turtles in our waters, fresh and salt, start anew. Alewives fight upstream to deposit roe in quiet inland pools. Frogs spread eggs in a jelly-like mass that will

soon show tiny tadpoles wriggling to swim free. Turtles bury rubbery eggs in soft sands along the shore.

Woodland animals roam their well-worn paths. Skunks waddle in the moonlight, trailing kits, nosing for slugs and larvae. Busy squirrels and chipmunks rediscover hidden stores or supplies of birdseed not locked away in metallic protection. Field mice, moles, sharp-nosed shrews tunnel and burrow and bring forth their young.

Along with these creatures, we, too, respond to lengthening days, warmer winds, gentler rains, the turning of the soil by earthworms and other unseen organisms.

Along with plant-life, we take new heart. Can faith fail in springtime? Can hope lie dormant when flowers burst into bloom and birds burst into song? Can pessimism prevail in the glow of a spring dawn?

Although the world is in turmoil, although there are wars and rumors of wars, although there are shortages and threats of more shortages, although the politicians leave us no illusions about their opponents, although prices spiral and there's no relief in sight, although the future is uncertain and we may be anxious, spring brings optimism as no other season can.

If the sap rises in the sugar maple, if the herring return to the run, if the 'possum gives birth and cradles its babies in the pouch, if the downy gosling paddles in its mother's wake, if the earth yields sprouting seed, can we be so mistaken in our faith that, somehow, we shall know days of less turmoil, of greater satisfaction, of more serenity?

As spring comes, comes hope. It comes in the heavy perfume of a hyacinth, the flash of white when a flicker flies, the ripples where a brown trout jumps clear of the water, and it comes in the hearts of men.

It's not that summer is perfect, no more than the future will be, that we welcome spring; it's not that winter was so dreadful, no more than the past was as terrible as it might have been, that we welcome spring.

It's the promise that's so wonderful about spring.