



'Tis the season of pine pollen.

This means the pine trees are mating. Since they can't rush around the landscape searching for suitable mates as humans do, nature has provided them with an efficient alternative.

They flower. And the flowers produce a very fine dust we call pollen. And the wind blows it around from tree to tree and in this manner fertilizes the flowers.

The trees bear fruit, called pine cones, which produce the seeds for another generation of pine trees.

The result of all this sexual activity among the pine trees is, for humans, an extra household chore called cleaning up the pine pollen.

The dust is a pale green color, and it gets into and onto everything. It coats the car, inside and out. It layers the floors, rugs, tabletops, porch, steps, driveway.

Pollen dust seeps through the smallest cracks to drift into bathroom and kitchen counters and sinks. It floats on puddles left from watering the lawn and shrubs. It clings to screens and windowpanes. It's a mess.

After about two weeks of letting fly with this stuff, the pine trees settle back down to being good neighbors for another year, producing only gentle sounds when the winds sigh through their branches, a matting of golden diddledees on crisp October mornings, an inconspicuous crop of pinecones for burning in the fireplace, and a clean-smelling fragrance mingled with salt air.

The best cure for pine pollen out-of-doors is a good heavy rainstorm. In the house the only solution is the duster, the sponge and the vacuum cleaner. Until the pollen season is over outside, there's little point in trying to keep dust-free inside.

In spite of 80° temperatures during the day and 65° temperatures at night, keeping the doors and windows fully equipped with storm sash and tightly closed does help limit the amount getting into the house.

All of us have the same problem, so we can all understand if our neighbors let housework slip during this next couple of weeks. It's fruitless to try to keep things spotless during this period, so we might as well concentrate on outside chores.

Getting the garden ready for summer, tomatoe plants settled in place, cucumbers started, beans in. Already our routine must include mowing the grass and pulling weeds.

If you haven't set up the birdbaths yet, you're missing the joys of watching the birds empty the shallow bowl half-a-dozen times a day so you will fill it again.

The birds get help in doing this; the cat, the neighbor's dog, and the squirrels also come to drink at the birdbath. It's a busy spot.

You may not realize it, but there are probably orioles living near your birdbath. If you want to see more of them, cut an orange in half and impale it, cut side up, on a nail driven into a stick -- the stick driven into the lawn. The orioles will come.

So will the cat birds. And so will the squirrels. Once the squirrels find the orange you will need to replace it, however, for they have voracious appetites for oranges.

Blue jays, doves, and chickadees pay little attention to fruit, but they are steady visitors at the birdbath, along with flickers, robins and grackles.

The grackles are busy turning over dry leaves to find insects. How they make the leaves fly! Towhees, too, hop and scratch in the dry oak leaves that have lain under the shrubbery all winter long.

This, the month of June, is the month for roses, for asparagus, for strawberries. We've enjoyed the spring bulbs -- the jonquils, the tulips, the narcissus -- now we have the roses.

The azaleas and rhododendrons are past their prime; last week the apple blossoms drifted down like warm snowflakes and are browning beneath the leafing branches; the lilacs celebrated Memorial Day for us.

Summer, with its tourists, its traffic, its beach weather, its long sun-filled days, is upon us. The annuals crowd the garden for blooming space. Petunias and marigolds nudge zinnias and nasturtiums. Snap dragons grow tall and iris compete with gladioli.

And in the vegetable garden we watch tomatoes fade from green to white, and finally redden; cucumbers grow, seemingly overnight, from the size of your little finger to great balloon-shaped green footballs. How they hide beneath their leaves when they're just the right size for

eating is their secret and one they won't share.

Summer squash, green beans, new potatoes, carrots, radishes, green peppers -- all glow with invitations to summer salads. The long months of winter are forgotten in the plenty of summer vegetables.

No longer must we choose between tasteless mushy tomatoes from the market or going without any. From the day the first tomato is ripe enough to harvest until the first heavy frost, the garden will give us more than we can use or give away.

Come August -- come corn. I'm rushing the season because it's delicious beyond description, and anticipation controls my thoughts. There's no better corn than ears rushed from the Cape Cod garden to the potful of boiling water and then onto the table.

Every season has its beauties and every season has its special joys, some visual, some gastronomical; each, at the time it's upon us, seems "best".

Perhaps it's like that with the seasons of life; while we are children, being a child is ideal. As we grow to teenage, that's the time of excitement and discovery.

The young adult thrives on the challenges of independence, emancipation, and opportunities of the future. Middle-age brings quiet contentment, goals achieved and goals still to be reached.

Seniority offers serenity and completion, memories of past pleasures mingled with present-day comforts, well-earned rest from responsibility and pressure.

It's an idyllic picture, and one not always reflected the reality of today's problem-strewn life; yet the world has never been without problems nor is there any promise it will ever be so.

There'll always be pine pollen to mar the shining surfaces of mahogany tables. There'll always be squirrels to steal the orange from the oriole. There'll always be potatoe bugs and tomatoe worms as long as there are potatoes and tomatoes.

The borer will always attack corn; the beetles will always chew away in their subterranean tunnels at the tender roots of plants and grasses.

People will always be prone to suffer and, finally, die. But the wind will continue to blow, the sun rise and set, the tides ebb and flow, and new generations follow the old.

These are the marches of the seasons, whether pine trees or people. 'Tis the way of the world.