

VILLAGE VIEW

ANDREA LEONARD

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That big loud "Whoosh!" that sounded from one end of the Cape to the other, last week, was a unanimous sigh of relief as the summer of '81 slipped into the past, Labor Day dropped from the calendar, children returned to school, and the bridges spanning the Cape Cod Canal disgorged a record number of tourists to fan out over the northeast like streams cascading from opened sluiceways.

While the population hasn't yet returned to the sparse numbers of January and February (which are becoming the only months of the year when the sight of an out-of-state license plate comes as a surprise), traffic is thinner, tour buses chugging along Cape Cod lanes and by-ways are fewer, and the natives can resume the time schedules for commuting to workplaces they abandoned in June.

Fall is a lovely season here on the Cape. Although our foliage doesn't burn with the same intensity that's found in the White Mountains of New Hampshire or the Green Mountains of Vermont, the reds and golds of autumn against the backdrop of a blue ocean attain a contrast no mountain scenery supplies. Where, in the hills, can we find a vista of broad marsh, golden now rather than green, ringed with scarlet maples, yellowing cherry, poplar, and willow, and agleam under the shimmering blue bowl of a crisp clear sunshiny day, all punctuated with traces of a clear stream flowing into a broad calm bay?

Fall is a busy season, too, here on the Cape. The final harvests from the gardens now wait to be gathered. Before frost blackens the tomato plants, the still-green fruits must be gathered and stored in a cool place, wrapped in paper, and allowed to ripen off the vines. Perhaps there're enough still-green tomatoes to make garden relish for adding spicy flavors to traditional Saturday night suppers of hot dogs and beans. Or for a different flavor to an October supper, you might try Curried Green Tomatoes.

Peel and slice a couple of small onions and slice them into four tablespoons of margarine melted in a frying pan. Stir in two teaspoons of curry powder after the onions become translucent. Cut four large green tomatoes into eight pieces each, salt and pepper them lightly, toss them into the pan, and fry over medium heat about 15 minutes for a delectable vegetable dish.

If you're a crepe-lover, try this Green Tomato Cheddar filling. Heat three tablespoons of oil in a skillet and saute two medium onions, sliced, and two garlic cloves, minced, in the oil for a few minutes. Add eight cups of sliced green tomatoes, cover skillet, and cook over medium heat for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Thicken with two tablespoons of flour stirred into a little cool water, salt and pepper to taste. Spoon mixture on eight crepes, sprinkle a cup of shredded cheddar cheese on top (divided evenly among the crepes). Roll up, place in baking dish, brush tops with margarine, and bake 15 minutes in 325° oven. Allow to cool five minutes before serving.

While you're cleaning up the garden is a fine time to start a compost heap for top-dressing next year's vegetable garden. If you have a compost bin, use it; if you don't and are too lazy to build one, you can dig a small depression in the earth, cover it with a piece of old window screen, and after spreading a thin layer of sand on top of the screen, put on all the garden debris. Top it off with a little sand, leaves raked from the lawn, and another layer of sand to keep the leaves from blowing away. Dedicated composters will shape the heap so it forms a cone; then they'll add kitchen wastes to the center all winter long.

Come spring, once the frost is melted, turn the pile with a pitch fork a couple of times. By mid-May you'll have a rich friable heap of soil to spread on the garden instead of

fertilizer. You'll find you grow healthier and tastier vegetables, and your plants will be more resistant to disease and insect damage. If you layer some seaweed from the beach in your compost, you'll be pleased with the results, too.

Next summer, you may find yourself growing vegetables you didn't plant, volunteers from seeds you discarded as garbage this fall. Good possibilities include strawberries, summer squash, zucchini, butternut and acorn squash, and—naturally—more tomatoes. Don't scoff! Such volunteers are, after all, one of the reasons the human race has survived for millions of years.

Lawns and tools need special care this season. When the last leaves have fallen, lawns should be raked clean to prevent grasses from being smothered over the winter. Tools, hoses and sprinklers winter best in a dry basement, the tools with a light coating of oil to ward off rust; hoses, drained and coiled. Run gasoline-powered equipment dry, and don't try to store gas over the winter.

If a wood-burner helps supplement your domestic heating system, you'll have a busy fall, indeed. The couple of cords of wood you purchased from the conservation department last spring is now seasoned enough for use. Before snow flies, it must be cut to stove-length and ought to be split. Find a sheltered spot, handy to a rear entrance, where you can store it conveniently and where it won't get soaked during fall rains. A woodshed is ideal, but lacking that, heavy sheet plastic will provide good protection.

When I start a woodpile, I begin with a layer of pine logs directly on the ground; then pile hardwood on top. The pine keeps the oak and birch off the damp ground and lets the air circulate through the logs.

Your solar hot water system should be checked every two years, and the anti-freeze drained and renewed, just as your car radiator's anti-freeze should be flushed and replaced. Your furnace should start the season with a thorough cleaning and adjustment so it works efficiently. And, if you do burn wood in either a fireplace or a stove, be certain to call the chimneysweep to clean creosote from the flue before you start your winter fires. A chimney fire can burn your house down.

When all these chores are finished, check for drafts around doors and windows; if you find any, caulk and weatherstrip. Those little foam blankets that fit behind electric outlets on outside walls can save you a surprising amount of heating dollars in cold months, too.

Are you buttoned up and ready for winter yet? Probably not yet; but you soon will be. Take a break from all this labor, and enjoy a walk along the beach. Gather some vitamin-rich rose hips, for rose hip tea and syrup. Gather some bayberries and bittersweet for winter bouquets. Gather autumn leaves but avoid poison ivy. Gather some beach plums and make a batch of the finest jelly you've ever spread on toast.

The summer's gone. The kids are back in school. The harvest is in. The To Do list may still be long. But the mobs of tourists have fallen off to a trickle, and we can breathe easier. There will be plenty of lovely Indian Summer days, this year, before snows blanket our hills and shores. This time of year, Cape Cod reverts to its own.

"Whoosh!"