

Less Gloom, More Bloom

April can be a trickster. This year I've been April's fool, falling for the here and there glimpses of sun. On a recent rare day of warmer temperatures, I pruned and raked and fertilized until dark, certain the drear and cold was over, that spring was finally here. I bet I wasn't alone. One brief hour of sun and who didn't hurl themselves at backyards and north forties believing winter was banished until next November. Who didn't add to the inventory of cuss words getting the pull cord mower up and running, the harrow hooked up to the tractor. Who didn't walk dreamily past nursery shelves full of perennials and annuals for sale, as if lost in love, or pause to congratulate the first few crocuses pushing bravely through the soil. But waking up to more cold and gray, we all were brought abruptly back to our senses. March's lion increasingly overstays its welcome in central Oregon and April's lambswool is made not only of rain showers, but also sleet and snow.

The good news is spring will come and, regardless of age, income, or where we call home, spring has always had, and always will have, the same intoxicating effect. Renewal, rebirth, hope. Less gloom, more bloom. Earth's constancy, her willingness to show up and re-up each spring inspires the same in us.

Earth Day is aptly observed in April. It's a chance to say thank you to our hostess, to ask, "How can I help?" Here are a few suggestions from Mother Earth for Earth Day-related activities to do, hopefully with grandchildren in tow. You know them, but they bear repeating: Conserve water. Reduce energy consumption. Plant a tree. Write letters to your legislators to divest from fossil fuel investments. Pick up litter. Support a local earth-friendly organization or a national one, such as Firedrill Fridays. Plant native plants. Watch and discuss an eco-documentary. Compost. Plant pollinators. Start a community garden.

It seems to me the new three Rs are reduce, reuse, recycle. More is not better. Less is. This was underscored by the comments from Finnish citizens when they recently learned their country had been selected as the happiest in the world for the sixth year in a row. According to Penelope Colston in her April 2023 New York Times article, "[Finns derive satisfaction](#) from leading sustainable lives and perceive financial success as being able to identify and meet basic needs." Or, as professor Arto O. Salonen at the University of Eastern Finland says, "...when you know what is enough, you are happy." Finns' expectations for contentment are reasonable, moderate, and if for some reason they aren't met, in the national spirit of what they call *sisu* or "determination in the face of setbacks," they don't complain, they persevere. Less is enough.

In addition to the observation of Earth Day, April is also national poetry month. Signs of spring have the same inspiring effect on those with a pen as on those with a garden hoe. And poetry, as a form, is the maestro of doing more with less...words. Perhaps you have a favorite spring-inspired poem or quote to tape to your refrigerator door as an antidote to cold, cloudy days while you wait for gardening season. Here are two I love:

"It Felt Love" by Hafiz

How
Did the rose

Ever open its heart
And give to this world
All its
Beauty?
It felt the encouragement of light
Against its
Being.
Otherwise,
We all remain
Too
Frightened.

Or this from Anais Nin: "And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk to blossom."

Grocery shopping on a snowy April day last week following my one day of a false spring, a bucket of daffodils caught my eye. I went home with five small bunches secured with rubber bands, each with their buds tight shut. I placed them in a vase of water overnight and the next morning was miraculously greeted by a bright yellow rejoicing, a bright yellow insistence on joy, beauty and the courage to do what, in the end, are the only things to do at any age in the face of life's seasonal challenges — channel you inner sisu and bloom.