

I suppose there are times when we are less busy than we are now, but I am not sure when these spells are. For the most part, life moves along as we are occupied with one thing or another. Right now, it seems like we are living in a vortex with tasks and responsibilities converging in a dense eddy where there are "must do now" jobs in every direction.

We finished shearing sheep this Saturday, just when the maple sap began to run again after an unwelcome break of too many days due to warm weather. The next morning we had our first new calf of the season. In about ten days, we had better be ready for new lambs, for they will begin to come whether we are ready or not.

Then, too, spring is supposedly here now. That is not true in our area, but it is certainly time to think ahead to the coming growing season. The first step was to find the trays for seed starting. I was sure I knew where I had stored them last summer, but that turned out to be a dead end. I finally located them in an entirely different place, surely one I thought would be "better" when I put them there.

We purchased some organic seed starting mix a few weeks ago, and I had left the bags in our warm basement where they would not freeze. Now, I got them out, set up the portable table I use for jobs like this, found a deep pan to mix water and the soil mix, and laid out the trays, loaded with the small containers with individual "cells."

I don't like to spend money on the little wooden or plastic sticks on which to write the variety of seeds in a tray. Instead, I take a pair of shears and cut up into small strips yogurt tubs or other plastic containers. With the fine point Sharpie that is **always** in my pocket, I can easily identify my seedlings.

Now, I am ready to sow seeds. It is still too early to start some vegetables, but others we sow in our unheated greenhouse and transplant later into beds in the open garden. Broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, and some of the onions and leeks are in this category.

There are also those I can start now, transplanting them after a few weeks into individual pots. The box from Fedco seeds is on the table, and I have sorted out the packets that I will plant today.

I am most concerned about getting tomatoes and peppers started

early. We often have a short season here, and killing frosts in August are not uncommon, and on occasion, we even have to cover tender plants in July. So, today, I will just plant tomato and pepper seeds.

It seems to me that we are more satisfied without succumbing to the lure of persuasive food advertising if we have a variety of our own gardens from which to choose. Our meals are not "the same old thing" day after day, because we plan and plant ahead, insuring that we will have a variety of foods for summer eating and for preserving for next winter. To help attain this goal we sow seeds of several kinds of tomatoes and peppers.

Some of our varieties are old favorites that we grow every year. But, we try new kinds, too, and if we like them, they soon become old favorites themselves.

One variety new to us that we will plant this year is Diamond Eggplant. The seed catalog describes it this way: "Open-pollinated. Kent Whealy brought this elongated slightly tapered dark purple eggplant back from the Ukraine in 1993. 2' plants set 2 1/2 X7" slender 12 oz. fruits in clusters. Firm flesh has good texture and entirely lacks that bitter eggplant taste. Because of its mild flavor and good cold-climate adaptation, Diamond is growing in popularity." Sounds as if Diamond will grow in our fussy conditions, and I think it will taste wonderful in the tomato/eggplant sauce we make and freeze each year. It is always fun to see how "new to us" plants prosper in our garden.

So, as we eat the last of the parsnips, we aren't that far from the day when we plant a new batch of seeds for next spring. This continual cycle of life, of which we are a part, has us in its grasp. We would not want it any other way.