

We are seldom content to “live in the moment.” Part of the reason is, of course, necessity. If we don’t plan ahead for certain times, we are left in a very precarious position. The old “grasshopper vs. ant” way of doing things means that we do prepare for what lies in the future if we are at all prudent. If I could not go to the fruit cellar for a jar of applesauce, or to the freezer for a beef roast, or to the root cellar for potatoes, we would not eat nearly as well—or as often—as we do.

That said, it also seems that one should enjoy a morning like this—soft snow flakes drifting down in the still February air—early barn chores and breakfast out of the way, a good book waiting on the table next to me. And, this is the time of year I like best, a season in which heat and humidity are not exasperating me.

And, I am enjoying the day, but I am also looking ahead to the next season. Spring is such a busy time on its own, even if we have not neglected to prepare a little in advance. So, in the midst of anticipating the immediate pleasure of a tour of the fields and woods on my skis, we must also give some consideration to the next season.

We started to do this, in fact, a few weeks ago. Now, a box of small paper packets of garden seeds rests on the desk. And, on a bench under one of the west windows are three heavy old pickle crocks.

Each crock holds two geranium plants. They don’t look like much right now, but last summer, the plants bloomed and bloomed, brightening the gray cabin outside wall with their crimson glow. Before the first heavy frost, I brought in the plants and stored them in the root cellar. There they rested, losing their leaves and remaining flowers and eventually, appearing to be dead.

A week ago, we brought the crocks up and set them on the bench. Using a pair of sheep hoof trimmers that I have renamed “garden nippers,” I cut the stems of the geraniums back to nearly nothing. They then looked even less liable to have a bit of life lurking somewhere in the remnants of the brown stalks.

Now, though, little leaves and stems are showing up, bright, light green evidence of life. If all goes well, these geraniums will again reside on the porch, blooming equally enthusiastically as they did last year.

Next to the box of garden seeds lie a couple of catalogs. One is from a nursery that has heirloom apple trees for sale. We have paged through it a few times, trying to decide which trees to order. Turning part of our excessive garden space into permanent fruit plantings has long been in our thoughts. A gift of a plum tree from visiting relatives from Sweden was the impetus we needed to get this plan into motion. We planted the tree behind the greenhouse, and this has motivated us to buy apple trees to add to that area. Already ordered are also blackberry bushes to plant near the raspberry rows.

The other catalog on the desk is from a hatchery. We have a dozen or so hens that provide us with all the eggs we use, and we have an incubator, as well, so we may set some eggs in the spring. But, we have

also thought of ordering ducklings again. We had a few ducks several years ago, and they can be very useful for helping train border collies. With Blue and Kate beginning to show interest in livestock, ducks might be helpful.

We have raised turkeys from poults in the past, and this year, the Murray McMurray catalog offers “midget turkeys” that mature at eight to twelve pounds. That would be a better size bird for us than the very large turkeys.

With maple syrup season and sheep shearing ahead of us, and then lambing with all that entails (and de-tails, too) before spring arrives, it is no wonder that we find February and March very busy months. And, there is nothing we like better than “busy.”

