

Intense times here on the farm give way to periods of transition. Ending one time-consuming job and beginning another creates a window of uncertainty. Right now, we are so accustomed to the labor and twenty-four hour a day attention to the details of the lambing season that we don't quite know how to release ourselves from that routine and become comfortable with the season to come. It happens every year, and now is one of those periods.

We have half the flock out on grass now, and the most of the rest will follow tomorrow. In the sheep shed there will still be a few young lambs and their mothers plus some that need extra attention, but the heavy work load has been lifted.

So, it should be easy to get busy with the next seasonal duties. And, it will be, once we establish a new routine. It is worth noticing how much "creatures of habit" we really are. For a few days, we won't quite know what we should do and in which order. But, after a week or so, lambing will be a memory, and we will be settled in the daily work of gardening, fence repair, barn cleaning, and other spring work.

The garden is my first concern. The greenhouse has small lettuce, spinach, and onion seedlings in some beds, but there is a lot of planting left to do, and I am later with it than I want to be. At the same time, the milk house needs a thorough cleaning and a new coat of paint before our milk cow freshens and provides us with dairy products for the summer once again.

The garden itself is undergoing a bit of a change. We are putting some areas into more permanent plantings. Our tendency has always been to plant too much, and this was not a problem during the years we were vendors at an area farm market. However, we quit that several seasons ago, but we didn't adjust our planting volume.

So, with the nice benefit of the high "deer fence" we are changing some of the garden area from annual production to permaculture. We have more berries, and this spring, we planted several semi-dwarf apple trees, as well.

Our main challenge is, as always, the severe micro-climate on this farm. We live in a very cold spot. We have frost when everyone else in the area is enjoying above freezing temperatures, and our growing season probably is a week shorter on each end in comparison with that of our neighbors. So, we always know that the trees, berry bushes, and plants we choose must be very hardy, and they may, even then, find our environment too harsh.

But, you know what? We can really raise rhubarb! It tolerates the hardest winters, the most volatile weather changes of spring, and right now, it is nearly ready to provide material for the first pie of the season. That is a very good thing.

So, tired out from lambing—followed by a nasty case of some intestinal virus—we will probably go around in circles for a few days, wondering just what we should do next, but, with the chorus of frogs accompanying our work and the summer birds singing, we will soon be familiar once again with the spring season.