

Another seven weeks will pass before we experience the shortest day of the year. Nearly all of the deciduous trees have lost their leaves, and the country is acquiring a new base color. Green, the hue that dominates our lives from May through most of October, has given way to a brown/gray that many people find depressing and unappealing.

That is not true in my case. I like this time of year, when the winds from the north and west have a distinct chill, when the bare limbs of the hardwoods and popples allow us to see farther.

And the “bones” of the country around us are visible again, no longer shrouded in the leafy growth that hides the contours from our sight. That, too, makes it feel like we are closer to this planet we call home.

For the time we can spend indoors, November gives us hours of dark for reading, for “inside” projects, and for sitting a little longer with a cup of tea. It is also one of those rare times when we have the option of refectation. On the farm, the daily hurry to “get things done before winter” is over. Livestock chores are arranged, and we have slid into the comfortable, familiar routine. Christmas is still almost two months away, so that celebration has not yet intruded on our peace and quiet.

As November arrives this weekend, I will be ready with my plans for the month. Like a lot of other things, plans are not always fulfilled, but, at the least, give an “outline” for activities that help us keep our lives organized. I have a weaving project to finish this next week, and there is a book review for a magazine that I must do.

And, I want to get my spinning wheel and carding machine in order for use again. The carding machine needs new drive belts, and I have ordered them. That will be the first step. Some tasks can be interchanged as far as order is concerned, but a so-called “sheep to shawl” project is not one of them, I have an idea for something I want to knit for a friend. But, I can’t just sit down with my knitting needles and yarn and begin to work.

At least, I don’t have to begin this endeavor by shearing a sheep. I have the wool in a bag, all washed. But, I do have to “card” it, combing out the fibers and smoothing them. Then, the spinning wheel, with a little help from me, can do its job. If I want to dye the yarn I make, that is another step, one that involves cooking the fibers with something that changes the color. Finally, with a ball of yarn, I can sit down and knit, the perfect project for a dark November evening.

So, gray, monochromatic November will not come on as a depressing yearly happening over which we have no control. Instead, it will arrive as a gift; a present of time to read, hours for contemplation, and weeks that provide time for thinking back on this most unusual year. And, too, we have the opportunity for looking ahead and planning how to confront whatever the next year brings. December is too full of holiday activity. November is that time to think about the past and plan for the future.