

The word that is often on the tip of the tongue here at Coe Creek right now is “almost.” We are “almost” finished with the lambing process; the hazelnut bushes are “almost” ready to change from bud to leaf; Halvan is “almost” ready to have her calf; and, the renovated greenhouse is “almost” ready to use again.

In the last case, we are waiting a bit impatiently. The rolled up woven plastic covering is perched on the peak, ready to cascade down both sides. Then, it will just be necessary to fasten it to the ash frame, and I can begin to plant seeds within the structure and set out plants there, too.

But, we need a still, breeze-free period of time to roll down the plastic and secure it. And any such blocks of time we have had recently have been right at chore time when we needed to take care of livestock. So, we are waiting, even if not always very patiently.

Meanwhile, on the plant stand in the basement, the tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant seedlings are becoming bigger every day. I was so worried this year that the seeds would not come up—actually this is a yearly concern of mine. I just don’t have faith in seeds. But, after they did emerge from the soil, taking longer than most years I thought—again, as usual—that they were puny and sick-looking. But, once more following the annual pattern, they began to grow vigorously and now look sturdy under the purplish glow of the grow lights.

So, that gives me reason for a new worry. What if they grow too big before I can put them in the greenhouse? What if I have to transplant one more time and then have no room on the plant stand? What if I don’t give them enough water? Or too much? I am “almost” certain that this will happen, though it has never occurred yet.

Some seasons progress almost seamlessly as we move from task to task, not doing our work automatically, but rarely agonizing over the consequences of every little decision.

The beginning of the garden season is something else. The results of our decisions have actual influence on what will be on our dinner table next winter. I am not sure how many people garden with this in mind. Perhaps, for a lot of folks who grow vegetables in home plots, it is a “hobby.” Someone asked me that question once: “Do you garden for a hobby, or do you sell produce?” The only reasonable answer I could give was, “Neither. We grow food for ourselves to eat.” I am sure that the answer I gave, probably in a rather chilly tone, was not truly comprehended by the questioner. Food, after all, most people assume, comes from the supermarket, the farmers’ markets, the corner store.

A family member recently mentioned that she had used the last package of frozen corn in the freezer, that this time of year is when that point is reached when the larder begins to look rather sparse.

The cupboard isn’t bare here yet, but the choices are diminishing. There are lots of bags of green filet beans but only fair amount of beets, broccoli, cauliflower, and a little corn. But, there are still lots of potatoes and onions in the root cellar, sprouts indicating that spring is about here, but the produce is

still very edible. There are still carrots buried in sand, too. The fruit cupboard has more empty jars than full ones, but there are still jars of peaches, pears, and applesauce. In the freezer the strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries are occupying smaller and smaller portions of the room. The rhubarb is gone, but that star of early spring is already leafed out and growing bright red stalks in the garden. The saving factor here on Coe Creek, though, is our ample supply of meat. We won't starve while we wait for spring's greens, but we won't have the variety of flavors that prevail during the rest of the year.

Still, once again, spring is "almost" here. We have enough provender to wait out Mother Nature.