

Sitting at the spinning wheel leaves the mind free for reflection. Except during those first fraught days when one is learning to spin thread and yarn by hand, it is a relaxing task. Thoughts can wander, and, in fact, the motion of the wheel and the whirring of its action encourage, even demand that thinking processes undergo a change from “normal.”

I am trying, during this short month of February, to empty some wool tubs I have stored. Much of this wool has been dyed, mostly from plant sources here on Coe Creek. There are a couple of bags of wool I colored with commercial dyes, and there is a natural black fleece. And, there are, of course, some sheep’s white fleeces, as well.

I have finished carding and spinning the white wool, turning it into thick yarn for a couple of rugs I will make in the coming months. Now, I have begun working on the colors. This afternoon I carded enough goldenrod yellow (*solidago canadensis*) wool for four spinning batts. After a short break, I will resume making wool ready to spin, this time focusing on walnut-hull dyed fleece.

I started thinking about the news reports that indicate that a majority of Americans who have begun working at home during the pandemic would really prefer to continue this way. It seemed like this report was surprising to a lot of people. I suppose for those who need constant interaction with others, this could be the case, and it could result in less satisfaction with work and with life in general.

The people I have talked to personally seem to have quite another view. One engineer said that he is so much more productive without the interruptions that invariably happen in an office with other people, and that it has resulted in his having more free time. Another person said that she loves looking out on a snowy or icy day knowing she doesn’t have to get in the car and drive.

A woman also told me that her relationship with her dog has been enhanced by her presence at home. Her pet has her in the house so much more that it is much less anxious and does not need to be shut in a crate or tied.

I have heard, though, that some cats are not so thrilled with their people being at home day in and day out. Apparently, these cats, who sleep for sometimes 20 hours a day, were accustomed to having the house to themselves. The presence of humans when “they are supposed to be at work now!” angers some felines, and they, of course, have ways of taking out their frustrations on their owners or their owners’ upholstery and curtains.

Perhaps, the advantages of a way of life that has always been normal for many of us are beginning to appeal to a larger part of our population. It seems to me that the environmental and financial benefits of leaving a car in the garage would make a home work schedule very desirable.

The “downside” of working at home, though, is for many people composed of some of the very advantages that others see. For individuals who thrive only with a lot of interaction with other people, who “bloom” in high stress, activity-filled days, working at home would be a challenge. It will be

interesting to see how all this works out if the world actually does return to something that we used to think of as “normal.”

And meanwhile, the fluffy wool batts are piling up in my baskets. I have finished with the dyed colors of fleece and am not looking forward with anticipation to the many small bags of natural grays of various shades, the browns and tans, and the pure blacks of sheep-colored wool. And to use an old phrase regarding daydreaming one seldom hears these days, I will continue to “gather wool.”