

The tomato seeds I planted several days ago are up now and beginning to show their first true leaves. I guess that means that this is the beginning of a new gardening season. Or, does it?

Maybe, instead, it is the end of the last one. A few days ago, I went into the garden on the first day I could open the gate that was frozen down. I entered the greenhouse, all empty now, and picked up a hoe. Then, I searched out the row of parsnips that we had planted last May. These creamy white roots are always most tasty after a cold season in the ground, so we leave them when we put the garden to bed in the fall. Now, amidst the greening rye ground cover I saw the parsnip leaves.

This wasn't a wonderful crop last summer. For some reason, the parsnips were smaller than usual, but they were still big enough to be worth harvesting.

I dug through the partly frozen dirt and mud and unearthed the pale, tapered roots. I had a pail with me from the milk house, so I dug up enough parsnips for a meal. I took them to the milk house and washed off the mud and then carried them on home to the cabin.

We ate those parsnips the next day. There are lots of recipes for delicious dishes based on parsnips, but I was busy—we had lambs to dock and castrate that morning—so I just peeled them, chunked them up, coated them with a little extra virgin olive oil and salt and pepper and put them in the oven alongside whatever else was going to be on the dinner menu.

Those parsnips were superb. They are a sweet vegetable, and they had nearly caramelized in the oven, were golden brown, and were delicious.

A lot of people don't like parsnips. I can't understand why. There is absolutely nothing objectionable in either taste or appearance, but they have a bad reputation with many folks. Well, that is okay. I will eat their share of parsnips, too.

Meanwhile, those tiny tomato seedlings show signs of a new season on its way. I will soon transplant them into small pots and then into quart sized yogurt containers I have saved for years. They will grow and flourish—I hope—bathed in the eerie glow of the grow lights that hang above each shelf of our plant stand in the basement. And, as tomato season rolls around this coming summer and fall, I hope there will be a long row of healthy, green, celery-like foliage of parsnips telling me that when March and April come next year, there will be a harvest waiting. And, I guess, gardening season never really ends. From tomato seedlings to parsnips and to the freezer full of vegetables in the basement, our garden is always right there in front of us.