

## SOME FALL MUSINGS

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I don't know about you, but for me FALL really did *FALL* with a sudden thud this year! One day was cotton capris and tees, and the next day was corduroy and flannel. And was I ready? No way! I never say "goodbye" to summer without a fight, but this time I had to give in or freeze my (sandal-clad) toes off.

Once I got over the shock, I did have to admit that the weather has been beautiful, so I sat myself down to take stock of the pros and cons of the season. As I sat, I realized that the best thing I could do was to be careful where to direct my eyes, and what to avoid or at least ignore. As Leonard Cohen said in his song "Suzanne", "*She showed me where to look among the flowers and the garbage.*" Well, not quite garbage, but certainly plant debris! Some plants are brown, some wilted, some wildly overgrown, and some trampled by a certain nameless dog! So - don't look!

However, there are some noble troopers who have either continued to flower, waited until now to flower, or re-flowered now that it's cool.

Among those still in colorful bloom are ***Rudbeckia Indian Summer, Thunbergia, Bougainvillea, Mandevilla, Tuberous Begonia, Browallia, Coleus (well, leaves), Angelonia, Vinca, Phlox, and Annual Salvia.***

Still hanging on but not great are **Geraniums, Million Bells, Alyssum** and a few others too pitiful to mention.

Among those first coming into bloom are **Asters and Fall Anemones**.

And among the pleasant surprises are a modest flush of new bloom on the **Japanese Spirea**, and a happy spread and flowering of **Nasturtium**, which loves cool, sunny days.

As for my **FARM** (Ha Ha Ha), all in pots, this is the report:

I ate the "last **Fig** of summer" in early September - I harvested about two a day throughout August.

I am still picking and cooking my tiny **Eggplants** - the one plant in a basket yielded a bountiful harvest through August and September.

I have two **STRAWBERRY** plants in pots, one ALPINE and one REGULAR, and both are still yielding an occasional berry. They both did well all summer, with the bonus of beautiful flowers (one white, one red). The regulars tasted good, but the tiny alpiners were as sweet as promised!

And my various **Herbs** in pots are straggly but alive - but not too tempting to cut and eat! Only the BAY is beautiful and flourishing. That one has wintered over for years!



I've also made another, I think very good, compromise with Mother Nature, which costs me nothing in money or effort, and in fact saves me lots of work. You know how they say "A weed is just a good plant in the wrong place"? Well, I used to spend all summer pulling out big, leafy "weeds" that self-seed in lots of places. This summer I decided to leave them, and was rewarded in fall with a lavish bloom of tiny but bountiful white shrub-like flowers in perfect spots. My guess is that they are a variety of aster which I may have had in the past as a cultivar but which has reverted to the species. Please have a look at the photo and tell me if you agree.

What I have discovered to be the **BEST PART OF FALL** is a surprising *lassitude* - admit it, I mean *laziness* - which is quite delightful while it lasts. (Another musical reference - The Beatles tell us to "Let It Be" and I do!) I love all the articles that advise us NOT TO CLEAN UP in the fall, for the noble, altruistic reason that it's best for the insects and small beasties! I take that advice to heart, and have learned to love the wild, uncultivated look that is taking over. So there I sit, admiring the reaching vine tendrils, the overgrown shrubs, the first falling leaves, and the cheerful general messiness. And should I be tempted to get out of the chair and DO SOMETHING, my dog Riva cleverly jumps into my lap and anchors me in place! Good dog!

Of course this cannot last, and as we all know FALL is equal to spring in being a season of BIG JOBS and LITTLE CHORES. With our changing weather, I find that what used to be done in September now waits for October, and the October work can wait for November. But come they must, sooner or later!

For me that means cutting down the perennials to short stalks; composting the annuals and prunings; spreading finished compost on the garden beds; emptying patio pots; trimming, cleaning and bringing in those plants which overwinter on my unheated porch; and planting the (way too many) tulip and daffodil bulbs which are on order.

Well, those are my thoughts for now Time to close the computer, go outside, and - DO NOTHING!

Happy Autumn to you all!

