

## Reflections on Gratitude

By Susan Camp

“The World is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers; --  
Little we see in Nature that is ours...”

William Wordsworth’s lines seem to me more relevant today than they might have been during his lifetime. Twenty-four hours a day, every day, we are bombarded with bad news: catastrophic natural disasters, mass shootings, wars, famine, poverty, political dissension, oppression of minority groups, and the list continues. Cable news never sleeps. How can we survive the daily onslaught of miserable events?

I wrote the above paragraph in the “Gardening Corner” for Thanksgiving 2017, and I see that today we remain troubled by many of the same issues that disturbed and frightened us seven years ago, but Thanksgiving has come round again as it does every year, with its eternal message of gratitude. On this one day, we will celebrate family and friends with abundant food and football, but what about the other 364 days of the year? What do we celebrate the rest of the year? Do we feel the same warm glow every day for all we have? Probably not. Real life has a way of interfering with our joy, our hope, and our gratefulness.

Lately, I have been thinking a lot about ways to escape the noise of the world and find some peace. Life is serious business, and we all need some time off to relax and recharge from the reality of everyday life.

I don’t pretend to have the answers for the woes of the world, but I have discovered a few simple techniques that help me to refocus on what is truly important to me.

First, turn off and tune out: the phone, the TV, the computer. This is an ironic statement because I am typing away on my PC right now, but as soon as I send this column to the Gazette-Journal, I am going to turn it off and go outside, just to walk around, maybe pick up some downed branches from the recent high winds or walk up to Jim’s garden to check on the progress of his Brussels sprouts. Just standing in the sunshine and breathing the crisp, cool November air is enough to revive my spirits and remind me of why I love living here on Cedarbush Creek.

Secondly, back away from the holiday frenzy. Don’t get caught up in the shopping mania. Buy fewer, but hopefully, more meaningful gifts for family members and friends. Donate time or money to charitable organizations to help make someone else’s holidays a little brighter. Scaling

back on the holiday craziness can mean we have more time to enjoy the rewards for our hard work and rekindle our sense of gratitude.

Most of all, begin to recultivate and regain your childlike wonder and curiosity for the beauty and variety of the natural world. On your walks in the woods or at the park, look for different kinds of acorns or pinecones, then try to identify them using a field guide. Study the color, symmetry, and beauty of an oak or maple leaf. Marvel at golden beech leaves that hang on the trees all winter. Thank the trees for their leafy elegance, their cooling shade in summer, their berries and nuts that feed the birds and animals, and their sheltering boughs that provide a home for small creatures.

Sit on a park bench and watch the antics of cheeky squirrels as they race up and down the trees, always gathering more nuts for winter, which they will inevitably lose. Go to a field on a late autumn afternoon. Stand very still and be rewarded by the sight of the deer that come to feed. Thank them and the squirrels, raccoons, and foxes, too, for enriching our lives with their beauty and grace.

Every day, pay attention to all of the simple, natural things, and say “Thank you.” May you enjoy a Thanksgiving filled with laughter, joy, and gratitude.