

In the Garden with Shobha Vanchiswar



November 20, 2009

Giving Thanks

This extended period of days with pleasant temperatures has been supremely welcome. It has made putting the garden to bed a very enjoyable time. I can easily recall past Novembers when bone-chilling winds and super-hardened soil froze my fingers as I worked to cut back and clean up. Those were the times when I was sorely tempted to chuck this whole gardening thing. But this year, it has been a pleasure. The work is always hard, but the joy of the mild weather made it seem nothing more than good, healthy exercise. The bulbs are in, leaves raked, beds cleaned, pots either protected or put away and what's left are the last of the perennials to cut back. The roses, which still have a few blooms, will have their burlap fences in a few weeks.

Fall work is always bitter-sweet. All that labor knowing that winter is to follow is a bit sad. But I've learned to see the cold months not only as a welcome respite but a necessary time so we can have glorious flowers in the spring. Everything done now means there's that much less to do in spring and more time then to bask in the youthful beauty of the season.

Some vegetables still going strong

The vegetable bed in the community garden is, however, still going strong. The Swiss chard continues to provide and the cauliflower is ready for harvest. Clean up of this bed will be delayed and I don't mind.

Some vegetables like Brussel sprouts and cauliflower actually need the colder temperatures. It seems to sweeten them up and give them a delicious nutty flavor. Lettuces and parsley are not hindered by cooler days either. In all, I see the vegetable garden as a success. In spite of the unusual weather pattern, we have had a fairly steady supply of vegetables throughout the spring, summer and fall. Some plants like the zucchini and sweet peppers failed, but others did well. C'est la vie.

This past Saturday, the cauliflowers at the farmer's market were unusually small. The farmer was overhead saying, "We could call them gourmet cauliflowers, but it's really the crappy weather that has affected the size!"

Thank you to my readers

With Thanksgiving coming up, if there are any garden chores that have not been done, don't give them another thought. The tasks can wait and nothing horrible will happen. In fact, don't worry about any other stuff either. Take the opportunity of this wonderful holiday to celebrate being alive, for family and friends and yes, even the garden that tolerates you no matter what.

I have much for which I'm grateful, not the least of which is you, my regular reader. As my twelve-year-old daughter remarked several months ago after we had run into some people who asked me about things I'd written in this column, "Isn't it amazing, people actually read and do what you write!" Amazing indeed. Thank you.