



Times Remembered
Betty A. Young
BYoung505@Outlook.Com

housekeeping. They are chattering and going about their business of finding nesting materials.

A warm lazy feeling rises in me . . . a symptom that can only be diagnosed as the seasonal malady known as spring fever. The air smells faintly of flowers, and I wander across the yard to see if the forsythia bush is blooming. I planted the bush the first year we built the house, and it is now over eight feet tall. It brings the first yellow blooms of the season; a welcome sight after a hard winter.

In a sunny patch at the edge of the woods, golden-yellow daffodils bloom faithfully each March. We never tire of anticipating their dependable, perky beauty. These delightful flowers need no arranging. Just put them in a water-filled pitcher or vase to create an unmistakable message: Spring has arrived.

Here and there, a few tulips and crocuses lift their heads . . . a scraggly reminder that the squirrels did not take up the bulbs this past winter.

I look for dandelion leaves as they begin peeping through the soil. I pick two leaves but note that they are still too small to add to a salad. Dandelions are looked upon as a troublesome weed by many, but the strained juice of the leaves and roots can be used on the face to promote a youthful appearance.

Before the days of pharmacies, mountain people used the ingredients they found around them. Over the generations, different remedies were found to work for various conditions. The 12 most commonly used herbs were burdock, calendula, chamomile, dandelion, Echinacea, lemon balm, licorice, ginseng, nettles and Valerian.

Wild lettuce and greens were used in salads and cooked with a piece of fat back, served with a little oil and vinegar; that was delicious.

In the spring, children were given sulfur mixed with molasses or a dose of castor oil as a spring tonic to rev up their tired blood after the long cold winter months.

Several kinds of flowers were used for skin eruptions and to dispel melancholy. Many flowers and herbs were used fresh or dried for culinary purposes. Herbal ointments, teas, and syrups were used for cosmetic applications. Old timers even filled pillows with herbs. When these cushions were held close to the body, the warmth released the plant's fragrance . . . a practice the early colonists thought helped relieve the symptoms of rheumatism, gout and headache. Thyme, much established for its medicinal power, was a favorite filler for herbal pillows, and old records note that it helped relieve facial neuralgia.



Oklahoma Dept. of Wildlife Conservation

I stand twiddling the small dandelion in my fingers and wishing for an herb garden of my own. I believe I will try to plant one in a window box outside the kitchen door this year.

All this woolgathering in the sunshine gives me pleasure, but it does not tend to household matters. The wrens sound as though they are scolding me for daydreaming. I stop fantasizing about an herb garden and go to see if the mint is up. It hasn't sprouted yet, but through the trees I hear a faint sound of a garden tiller. My neighbors down the road must be preparing their garden to plant peas.

March Wrens Know

How the wrens know March has arrived is beyond me, but they have returned on schedule and are busy building a nest in the long neck gourd we hung a few years ago from the limb of a tree in the backyard. We cut a small hole in one side of the gourd and added a tiny perch just below the opening to entice the dainty migrants to set up

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