



Notes & Quotes from Dawn

Autumn
2023

As long as autumn lasts, I shall not have hands, canvas, and colors enough to paint the beautiful things I see. - Vincent Van Gogh

When my oldest daughter was around three years old, while showing me a colorful autumn leaf she had picked up, she said quite seriously and sweetly: “Mommy, did you know that leaves only speak to you if you listen very carefully?” . . .

Every leaf speaks bliss to me, fluttering from the autumn tree. ~Emily Bronte

In the mid 90’s I traveled to Boston, Massachusetts several years in a row in the fall to give COMPASSIONATE TOUCH Training workshops. I can remember going out for walks during breaks to enjoy the crisp fresh air and breathe in the beautiful autumn colors. I often picked up individual leaves among the fallen ones that caught my attention, admiring them for their symmetry and beauty. At some point I noticed that I was favoring certain shapes and colors. I was unconsciously considering the leaves I bent over to pick up more worthy of my attention than the ones with broken edges, wrinkles, or less color. Pondering that choice, I began to realize that just like every individual, especially those living out their lives in care facilities, every leaf has its own story and all of them deserved to be “listened to.”

One fall, after completing the Boston training, I was given a ride to Dartmouth College where I’d been asked to give a workshop at their Nursing School. At a particular point during this two plus hour drive, I became mesmerized by the resplendent display of autumn colors that crowded the hills and valleys on both sides of the highway we were traveling on. My driver realized I was observing autumn foliage the likes of which I’d never seen before. Perhaps amused by my repeated exclamations, she mentioned that they were having an unusually colorful autumn that year and asked if I would like her to pull over so I could take a picture. I was delighted to stand outside and just inhale the splendor before me.



Since then, I have been fortunate to spend time surrounded by autumnal grandeur in northern California as well as in Switzerland and Germany. And yet, those long ago moments of awe and wonder as I gazed out on that dazzling canopy of color in New Hampshire on that particular day linger in my memory.

There is something so special in the early leaves drifting from the trees – as if we are all to be allowed a chance to peel, to refresh, to start again. ~ Ruth Ahmed

Scientists are now saying that climate change is affecting both the timing and intensity of fall foliage. Bill Keeton, a professor of forest ecology and forestry at the University of Vermont explained in an interview on pbs.org that trees sense the onset of winter as the contrast between daytime temperatures and night temperatures increases and as the length of the day shortens. “This happens particularly after extreme droughts or, or after summer like we’ve just had with extreme rainfall and wet, saturated soils. These changes affect tree health, tree productivity, and their ability to produce some of these compounds that give us fall foliage.”

This seems to explain why the leaves in our neighborhood are changing color and dropping so slowly this year. In these early days of November the leaves on the birch trees outside the window of my study is just now turning more golden than green our home are on the birch trees outside the window of my study. As I write this, a gentle breeze is helping a few of them to float downward to rest on the sidewalk leading to our front porch. The leaves of the Japanese maple on the other side of the walk are still clinging to their branches will surely join them soon.



Today I'm thankful for the falling leaves of Autumn, a feast, a celebration for our eyes.... ~ Jim Yerman

Don't wait until the fourth Thursday in November, to sit with family and friends to give thanks. ~ Charmaine J. Forde

It is now well known that practicing gratitude can reduce anxiety and stress which is difficult to avoid these days when the daily news is so often overwhelming and heartbreaking. Let us take the time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives, to focus on what we have to be thankful for instead of what we wish was different. Let us practice gratitude as we greet each new morning and move through our days.

May we continue to strive for peace within and peace with all ~ Dawn

