



## Spring Has Just Begun

By Tammy Borden ©

In summer, the trees in front of my home shelter me from the view of the road, and I don't even notice the cars passing by. But now, only a few stubborn leaves remain tethered to a maze of branches and twigs. Not only can I see the road, but I can see beyond the hay field across the street, all the way to the neighbor's house a half mile away, a neighbor I've never even met. The dark silhouettes of tree trunks are a stark contrast against the gray winter sky beyond. It leaves me feeling somewhat exposed to the outside world. I much prefer my sanctuary in the heat of summer when passers-by have a difficult time even realizing a house exists beyond the expanse of maple, hickory and oak trees.

The long afternoon strolls through my yard have long since been a thing of the past. From my window I can see that the once glorious bed of hostas and Japanese painted ferns has faded into the landscape, now covered with a thick layer of fallen leaves. The only sign of a garden ever existing there are the random plant markers that occasionally pop up through the leaves, but those will soon be covered up by snow. Next to my drive way, I've cleared away the beautiful zinnias that drew so many compliments from visitors only a few months ago. All that remains is plain earth with a smattering of mulch.

Winter is here; another season has passed. All that once seemed so vibrant and full of life feels only like a memory now. The earth has fallen asleep. As winter continues, I know I'll start to forget what green grass even looks like, or what the scent of a fresh rain smells like. I must confess that as autumn turns to winter I feel a sense of loss, mourning and grieving the beauty that no longer can be seen. All I can feel is an absence of what used to fill my life with so much joy. Winter reminds me that things of this earth are only temporary. Life is temporary.

Or is it? It seems that way, doesn't it, especially in the midst of winter when everything is still and a shroud of darkness covers the earth? But we know that in the natural world there are seasons, and we've come to trust that there will always be spring, and that with it will come new life, and that life will be more beautiful and more magnificent than the season before. Despite the struggle to watch those things we love fade away and die... there's hope. It's that hope that sustains us through winter. But there's not only hope, but a belief and trust that when spring arrives, we'll see life again, and it will be more beautiful than before.

It is winter, not only in the garden, but in many hearts that have experienced the loss of someone they love. Our hearts mourn what once was, and as time passes, we try to not forget the memories. But all too soon, just like the scent of rain, we forget the sound of their laugh or the smell of their hair. The little quirks that once annoyed us are now what we sometimes miss the most, and we wish they were here to experience them together again with renewed appreciation and affection. But like watching a garden fade away, all we can feel is an absence of what used to fill our lives with so much joy. Our hearts feel exposed to the outside world that passes by, unaware of the ache inside our soul.

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Winter seems to come early for some, as it did for a friend of mine. Her winter came when she succumbed to cancer at a young age. She brought joy to so many with her serving heart, her unending zeal for life and a beauty that went beyond what anyone could see on the outside. But I believe that in the midst of such sadness there is still hope. You see, I believe that for those who remain, the winter will pass and there will be a spring, and we will get to see those we love again, more beautiful than before. Let that hope sustain you through the winter. The time in between is difficult; waiting and wondering what the next season will bring. We will still go through the mourning and grieving that winter brings. Meanwhile, we'll wait with hope, trust and a belief that one day soon, our paths will cross again and we'll enjoy new life together. But for me, I believe that for those who have gone on, a season of new life has already begun. Hmm... maybe winter didn't come early for my friend after all; maybe her spring has just begun.