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It was a hard winter

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NCR Today

It was a hard winter. Even in St. Louis we had a lot of snow, and worse, a lot of ice. Walking was treacherous. And the hard freezes continued at night through March. Even now the tips of some spring greens are shredded from those late low temps.

All the better to savor the glory of this spring. My apricots bloomed first. I didn't prune until late March and the indoor branches flowered right along with the trees the first of April, white flowers on the wood, white stamen, backed by maroon bud casings, emitting a faint delicate scent -- strong enough to fill both trees with bees that afternoon. The next day the magnolia next door began to open its buds. Three days later the Bradford pears burst out. Then flowering cherries and now red buds are almost finished, the dogwood are opening, and the lilacs have budded. Everywhere I look, I lift my eyes to flowering trees, lacy with different shades of white and pink and purple. Meanwhile on the ground the crocuses are gone but the daffodils and tulips are standing tall.

I always forget how beautiful my apricots are. Then they flower and I think they are the most beautiful of all the flowers. But now they're gone and I'm amazed all over again at how big spring is, how much new life there is. I was about ten when I first saw for myself the chartreuse green of new leaves and began to hunger for it each year in late winter. I think flowering trees were not in fashion then. Or I didn't see them until I became a gardener. Now I walk or drive along the street gaping at the show.

This is, I think, a kind of contemplation, loss of self in the other, loss of self in the delight of these moments of beauty.

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