DON’T RUSH THE HARBINGERS
Susie Hill, Frederick County Master Gardener

“When do you think things will green up?” a friend asked me this week, her voice filled with anticipation. While one answer came out of my mouth—something related to the calendar, another thought popped into my head. And that was…”Ugh.” I must be the only avid gardener I know who doesn’t eagerly await the harbingers of spring.

As a matter of fact, I would like to hit the pause button in February because I find the change of seasons to be bittersweet. I love springtime as much as gardeners and non-gardeners alike. I just don’t want to say goodbye to my friend Winter. Here are my reasons….

1. I love the restfulness and quiet of the wintertime.
2. I love that Orion greets me in a dark sky when I get home late after driving the kids all over town.
3. I love how the white bark of the sycamores pop against a blue sky as the sun rises in the morning.
4. I love the shape of naked trees in the landscape and the contrasts of yellows, browns, blues, and greens.
5. I love that evergreens get to steal the show for a change.
6. I love that I can distinctly hear the call of the barred owl at sunset. “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for y’all?”
7. I love watching how much the birds appreciate eating the seed heads of all the weeds I failed to pull or clean up in the fall.
8. I love that cold weather kills lots of brown marmorated stinkbugs.
9. I love that during the winter, I am in a dreaming state… all things gardening are possible. Seeds germinate as I anticipate, the weather cooperates, weeds are submissive to my superior gardening methods, and great bounty and beauty spring forth from every corner of my property.
10. I love that in my mind’s eye, my yard and garden look like Longwood Gardens.
11. Etcetera…

As I sit looking out the window, I hear spring rains on the tin roof. A small flock of tufted titmice are picking off the last of the dogwood berries and a mocking bird is eating the persistent berries off the Highbush cranberry. (The cranberries don’t taste very good, but they’ll do in a pinch.) A pair of bluebirds is building a nest in my birdhouse. And this week, I heard the spring peepers. For me, peepers are the ultimate harbinger of spring. Their song brings lightness to my heart and puts a spring in my step. The animals, like most gardeners and non-gardeners alike, are surely ready for spring.

I met a Persian woman recently and she told me that in Iran, they celebrate the New Year at the Spring Equinox. A New Year’s celebration is traditionally a time for reflection and appreciation.
as well as a time for anticipation and renewal. Saying goodbye to Winter is like bidding adieu to a dear friend after a long visit. I am grateful for the rest and beauty of this past winter so I don’t want to rush the harbingers of spring. Reluctantly, I will say goodbye to my friend Winter. At the same time, I will gratefully welcome another equally dear friend, Spring. The crocuses and daffodils will be here in no time. While we are waiting, it’s time to raise a glass.

For more information about the Frederick County Master Gardener/Horticulture Program, visit: http://extension.umd.edu/frederick-county/home-gardening or call Susan Trice at the University of Maryland Extension Frederick County office, 301-600-1596. Find us on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/mastergardenersfrederickcountymaryland The University of Maryland Extension programs are open to any person and will not discriminate against anyone because of race, age, sex, color, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry, national origin, marital status, genetic information, political affiliation, and gender identity or expression.