

Sure signs of spring depend on your state of mind

By Kathy Hedberg/Lewiston Tribune

GRANGEVILLE - A couple of weeks ago during one of those rare dry and sunny days, I heard a neighbor rev up his lawn mower and start to cut his lawn.

I wanted to go over there and say: "Really? You're so desperate for spring you're going to mow the winter stubble?"

But I figured the guy was in a fragile state of mind, and it was better to leave it alone.

I understand that fragile state. I have been hanging on to the filaments of sanity since about the second week of January.

I'm getting older, and I appreciate life doesn't go on forever. I know my time, and everyone's time, is limited on this Earth and it's not a good idea to wish any day or season away - who knows how many more we'll have?

Still, I find myself gritting my teeth and forcing myself to get through the phlegmatic flow of January and February with a smile. I don't want to appear over-eager, but when I heard that Punxsutawney Phil did not see his shadow last month, indicating an early spring, I wanted to fall to my knees and kiss the frozen earth in gratitude.

That's a sign of a woman who has been traumatized.

I talked to a horticulturist a couple weeks ago about the early signs of spring that indicate when gardeners may get out there and start to plant. Let me just clarify, the signs of spring in the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley are a heck of a lot different than the signs of spring on the Camas Prairie.

Down there - warmer than up here because the valley is that much closer to hell - people may see buttercups blooming, the grass starting to green, birds beginning to sing.

Up here on the frozen tundra we begin to sense spring is coming when the snow banks begin to melt, exposing the beer cans, plastic bags and disposable diapers that have lain hidden in the underbrush since last fall. You guys have flowers; we have trash.

We know it's spring when the Eagles bingo games get fewer and far between. Bingo is a winter sport. When the ground thaws, people don't want to be cooped up inside waiting for someone to call their number and declare them a winner. They want to get outside with their chain saws and start cutting up some firewood for next winter, which, if calculations are correct, should start right after the first of August.

People on the Camas Prairie are cued in on the change of seasons when they see the baby calves being born, dropped steaming from their mamas' bellies onto the frozen ground. Within minutes

they've popped up on wobbly legs and are slurping down those first few mouthfuls of milk. Baby animals get mobile quickly, because even they know it's too cold to dawdle around out there.

A person has to find hope wherever she can. Some folks get their signals from buttercups; others from exposed garbage and baby calves. But they're all sure indicators that spring is just around the corner.

That doesn't explain, however, my batty neighbor out there mowing his lawn in the middle of February. I think he must be from California.

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