

In a time of uncertainty, sometimes it's nice to think about how some things will never change. Spring will always come, plants will always flower, and the sun will always shine. We might not always see it, but it's always there nonetheless. I'm always one to encourage getting out into nature, and if you're able, a nature walk seems like a perfect distraction from everything right now. So I grabbed my coat and shoes and headed out the door into the almost spring weather.

I was immediately greeted by the sounds of geese and the wind on my face. But I also heard a sound that surprised me. I actually heard an insect buzzing! I didn't see it long enough to have any idea of what it was other than some sort of insect, but I did see it. Starting in my own yard, I was startled to see that there were several flashes of violet. With everything that has been going on, the hyacinths snuck up on me and flowered. I hadn't even realized that they had flower buds yet. Eager to see what else I might have missed, I knelt down next to the rose bush and got as close as I could. Sure enough, the buds and branches are starting to poke out of the rose bush already, and it is greening up nicely. Making note of the planters and how much space I have to fill with annuals, I keep moving through my yard. There are a few things just beginning to poke their bright green shoots up through the dirt, but it is way too early to know what they are. I'm glad to see them nonetheless though. Anything green, even if it is only flashes of it is always a welcome sight this time of year. I took a second to enjoy the bright blue sky and the sun on my face after too many days of cloudy, gray days. Before heading to the back yard, I stop by a branch of the maple tree that I can reach, and I can see the spent flower clusters telling me that they have already flowered, or are almost done flowering.

In the backyard, I check on the rose bush that we transplanted about a year and a half ago. We thought we had killed it, but it put on a few new sprouts last spring. It doesn't look any worse for the winter. Moving to our magnolia tree, it looks like the huge, fuzzy flower buds are starting to open. I can't wait for those gorgeous flowers to bloom. Continuing with my walk, I head to our asparagus bed, but it shows no signs of anything yet. Unless you can count the squirrels digging in it. I'll have to keep an eye on that and make sure they're not actually digging up the asparagus crowns or I'm going to have to have a word with the squirrels.

I leave my yard and head toward my local park. As I walk, I admire the newly green grass and try to decide if the elm across the street has flowered yet. Once in the park, I start checking all the trees I can reach to see if the buds have started to swell yet. Bud swell is a response to temperature and is a sign that new growth is coming. Sadly, I don't spot any on the ashes and hackberries that populate the park. I'm not surprised, with the cooler temperatures we've been having, but one can hope. The pine trees are the same, no signs of new growth yet. But I'm sure it's coming. As I wrap up my walk through the neighborhood, I'm in a much calmer state than I was when I started it. After all, spring is coming.

If you have any questions or would like to suggest a topic for me to write about, feel free to contact me at the Buffalo County Extension Office, at 308-236-1235, or mearnest2@unl.edu.