Notes from the Woods

Another hot summer has come to a close, and the days are too short to eat dinner out on the patio. But summer warmth persists, and dryness also after an August with adequate rain. I see some lawn services continuing to mow, even if unnecessary. That guarentees lawns stay brown, except for the stilt grass which seems to be more drought tolerant. Some trees are dropping leaves early. I recycle mine into the lawn with a mulching mower.

In spite of the heat a cool front approaches and preparations for fall weather are beginning. Hatches on our solar porch are closed. Used the window A/C perhaps 10 times this season, mostly relying on closing the house up in the morning and turning on the whole house fan in the evening. Our house rain barrel gets emptied and moved to the solar porch for the winter. It absorbs heat in the daytime and cools at night, helping the unheated porch stay well above freezing all winter. A large planting bed and block wall also absorb heat. So the cool greenhouse plants are on their way back inside. They knew what they were doing in the 18th century when they built our house facing south.

The juvenile humming birds heading south are now scarce at the feeders hanging outside the kitchen windows. The adult males left in August, and the females a couple of weeks later. You really have to admire the tenacity of these tiny birds to travel as far south as Costa Rica every year. So the syrup will be replaced by suet and sunflower seeds for the winter birds who are already poking around looking for a handout. The dryness this year has proved a viewing bonanza for us, as the winter birds bathe in groups in our old cement bird bath in the back yard. As many as 4 birds at a time squeeze in, a mix of bluebirds, chicadees, sparrows and titmice.

In the garden, tomatoes and pole beans are slowly giving up the ghost, while fall salads, cabbages, radicchio, mature. Evem the garden "weeds" are seasonal, with purslane givig way to chickweed as a salad addition. And the beautiful cabbage white butterfly have larva who eat more cabbage than we do. The raspberry plants I picked up at the Plant Swap last May are producing a nice fall crop in spite of my efforts to strip blooms until they are more established. Nature is wonderful - adapt to it and enjoy it, don't fight it.

Toni Robbi