

Thursday 05/27/10 The heat is gone, but the trees are still looking very dead.

What a heat wave we had the last several days. The thermometers at my house are showing 93 to 94 degrees by mid afternoon Tuesday and Wednesday. Some years we hardly ever hit 90 degrees here, or at least not until August. I just wonder if this is a hint of the summer to come.

In my hike south of here that puts me into the Park some of the time I have already said that I am seeing big numbers of oaks that the leaves are all dead and dried up. Actually in this weeks walks I observed that it is not just the young oaks in the understory but also I would say nearly half of the huge mature oaks have been hit with the frost as well. To me the trees appear to be dead or dying. I called the forester down at Bear Brook State Park to tell him of my observations and concerns. The good news is that he says many of the trees will now send out a second set of leaves and will not die. Though these trees will be stressed. I remember in the mid 80's when the gypsy moths ate nearly all the leaves that the bare trees even in August sent out some new green leaves, although to my recollection they were smaller ones. But even then many of the understory young trees died after being defoliated. I bet that same thing will happen again. I can't imagine these oaks will be producing many acorns this year, or next, as it takes red oaks two years to produce nuts.

The forester said that this was not a local phenomenon but is widespread across the state. And just like I figured it was the very early leaf out, in my mind no doubt caused by global warming that had the leaves developing some three weeks early. Then they were hit with a frost killing the tender leaves. And it is not just the oaks and beeches in the Park that took the hit but right here on the edge of my lawn the high bush cranberries I planted some twenty years ago all looked dead as well. There is not a sign of life left in them so I will be surprised if they re-leaf. But there will surely be no berries for wildlife on them this year. I wonder if other berry producing shrubs have had the same fate. These record warm March and April months causing a record early spring followed by a killing frost has sure wrecked havoc on the foods our wildlife depend on to survive.

I did get out on the ocean Tuesday helping a friend set nearly 30 lobster traps. While the thermometer soared into the 90's here it was such a pleasant day on the sea. A perfect day to be on the water despite the back breaking work of lugging the traps out on to the dock and baiting them as we loaded them on to his boat.

I bought 40 tomato and 20 pepper plants on Monday after I got the rest of the garden tilled but the record heat has kept me from getting them into the ground. I'm afraid they and me would wilt in this heat. But I'll get them in the ground today. My radishes, though they came up kind of sparse, are looking close to big enough to pick some. The cukes I put in way early have thrived as well. Maybe I'll have cukes by the 4th and spuds too.

Yesterday was one of my granddaughter's, Erin, forth birthday. I made sure I got a picture of her holding her cake. One of my earliest memories, that I know exactly when it happened, is me holding my birthday cake at age four. W lived in Tulsa Oklahoma at the time as my father was going to school there. Now I can remember other things around that time, and no doubt some when I was only three, but it is that exact moment in time on the front lawn of that house holding my cake that I can remember lots of details about. One of the things I bought Erin for her birthday is an ant farm. My daughter already called this morning saying Erin is anxious to populate her farm with my help. And we will. And a nice fishing pole for her as well. She's such an outdoor girl. Oh what fun we will have. Life is good.