

Hello everyone,

If it seems like I am always writing about change, it's because I see it everywhere. This time of year the very trees are changing, leaves changing color dramatically and falling. Perhaps they will have already fallen by the time you read this.

There's something about this time of the year that makes people eager to start pruning their trees and shrubs, but experts insist you should prune nothing in the fall. Just today I was looking at some branches sticking out and thinking about this. I have learned, though, that pruning them now stimulates new growth just when plants are trying to go dormant and severely weakens the plants.

Does this hold true for people? Not so much. Pruning our activities or making changes in our lives in the fall, stimulating new growth, can be just right. We see people downsizing their possessions, perhaps moving to a smaller home. One nice term for eliminating our less favored possessions and lightening our load is "editing." Some of us strive to edit our clothing or book collections, for example, to leave room for new additions. We aim for the cream of the crop rather than the cram of the crop. What we part with need not be thrown away but can be passed on to new homes. Happily, there is already room in our brains for new dances without removing the old.

After an avid folkdancer from California named Dusty Robb passed away, her daughter offered me boxes of her folkdancing memorabilia and recordings which I now have stored in my attic. Among them are wonderful "state-of-the-art" cassette tapes with the same dance recorded on both sides so no rewinding is necessary. There are also 45 rpm records of many favorite dances, lots of dance instructions, patterns and instructions for costumes, as well as some books on costumes. There are also hand drawn calendars with great caricatures of dancers from Mendocino Balkan Camp in the 1980s. If you are interested in being the next home for any of these items, please contact me.

We humans often have more control over our seasonal changes than other species. For us, migration seasonally can be volitional. I know several people who spend the winter in California or Arizona to escape the cold, for instance. Others spend time traveling to dance camps in warm climates. We have control over other aspects of our lives too. We choose with whom we socialize and how we spend our time. We choose where we invest our money and energy. We choose what dance events we attend and which dances we dance.

By our choices, we create the future in which we want to live. Our actions now create memories for a lifetime. The only thing more dangerous than taking a risk is not taking it. Remember, tragedy is not what we suffer but what we miss. As Lord Byron said, "On with the dance. Let joy be unconfined!"

Bernice Maslan