

IN MAINE THIS YEAR THE SNOW disappeared in early March, and that's when I started keeping an eye out for anything green—a bud on a shrub or tree, a tiny weed pushing itself through the dirt, a hint that the brown grass might begin to turn green. It takes time for the air and soil to warm up enough to make these things happen, and I've learned to appreciate the days between winter and spring when everything is brown and barren. This time has its own appeal. With no leaves on trees and no undergrowth, there is little to block one's view, and I can look out my kitchen window and see a long way into the woods. On sunny days, with the sun getting higher in the sky each day and nothing to block the sun's rays, the quality of light is brighter and stronger than at almost any other time of year. So while the outside world looks drab and lifeless, there is a sense of anticipation—something is about to change.

At some point in April there are always a few days of soaking rain, and afterward, when the sun finally comes out, its light penetrating to the ground, change happens. The grass is suddenly green, tree buds swell, green shoots of wildflowers, grasses, and ferns pop out of the ground. Large swaths or colonies of trout lily show up in the woods, a few sending out bright yellow flowers. Clusters of white-flowered anemone soon appear, and then the violets and bluets put out their sweet purple and blue flowers. Ferns grow a few inches taller every day. Tree buds pop open and leaves get bigger. Going forward, change is constant; something new appears nearly every day. Tom turkeys start to gobble, looking for a mate. Song birds return, building nests and singing from early morning to evening. Bees buzz around the azalea and rhododendron blossoms. One day temperatures warm to the eighties, and it's obvious—summer is here.

Summer

CHRISTINE BROOKS COTE

Thank you, Joni Mitchell

It's hard to imagine life without the changing of the seasons. Each has its unique traditions, smells, sounds, ambience. With summer nearly here, I look forward to being able to walk out of the house without a jacket or sweater or boots, just feeling the heat of the sun on my bare arms. I look forward to wildflowers, garden perennials, and the scent of blooming lilacs. The taste of tomatoes from the garden. Paddling my kayak on the pond in the evening when the only sound is that of my paddle leaving the water. Sitting on the porch, watching fireflies, hearing the loons call to one another. The smell of freshly mown grass. A late-afternoon thunderstorm.

Seasons remind us that in life, change is constant, but they also suggest that our experience of life is not entirely linear. Summer may end when temperatures drop and green leaves turn red, but summer comes back. We will have the chance to live through summer again—hopefully, many times—perhaps ever expanding our enjoyment of and appreciation for its offerings. And therein lies another lesson, one expressed by poets and songwriters of every generation: *everywhere we are we've been before*. How often do we sense a strange familiarity even though we are certain we've never been here before? Why do we feel so very comfortable and content with some new situations but not others, and are drawn to return again and again? It seems that life's experiences can transcend time and place if we accept the ride on the carousel that goes round and round. So, as the seasons come and go, take in the view, enjoy the ride on the painted ponies that go up and down, and make each revolution better than the last. ☀

[Watch and listen](#) to Joni Mitchell and other artists sing *Circle Game* at the 2022 Newport Folk Festival.



image credits

Sergey Vinogradov, Summer Contemplation, before 1938