

Beings of Light and Other Interesting Winter Realities

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In these colder, dark shorter days of winter I am reminded that we are indeed “beings of light”. This is a phrase that is tossed about somewhat lightly in our culture. As a horticulturist whose job it is to save trees, let me shed a little light on light (no pardon for all the redundancy).



The trees which most people believe to be dormant in these cold short days, are indeed still turning light energy from the sun into sugars. Most of us take this **daily** (all year long) miracle of photosynthesis for granted, the amazing reality of turning something intangible, like light, into something that we eat. Those sugars are what ALL of us depend on for our food, either primarily as plant based food, or secondarily as animal based food. That photosynthetic process is, of course the source of our oxygenated air supply as well.

There is SO much happening in the landscape during these darker days of winter. I am also reminded of the fact that the undisturbed planting beds and soils of our gardens contain millions, billions and even trillions of living organisms that are diligently doing their jobs while we think they are dead or dormant. Gilbert is spending time in his article sharing about the soil organisms, but I want to remind us that the activities above ground are equally important. Delaying home landscape cleanup in the fall can provide essential overwintering habitat for many beneficial insects. Insects like Lacewings, solitary native bees, and Fritillary butterflies. That is because they hang out on sticks, curled up in their chrysalis, tucked under leaves or

generally enjoying the cover and protection that leaf litter and decaying plants provide through out the winter while they wait for the longer warmer days ahead. Keeping our soils as undisturbed as possible helps to promote the life within and without. That is why it is a GOOD idea to prevent your landscapers from blowing leaves away and or cultivating the soils in the fall or spring.

So on these short days, we ARE indeed, beings of light. We could not exist without it. We miss it when in short supply, like now. We can say thank you for the fact that we have begun the march towards the lengthening days of spring. By being mindful and intentional of the world around us, we can help many others survive through the dark. Even though there are no doubt more cold days ahead, we can shine our cache of light during these darker days to remind one another of the sunnier times coming.

So as we journey the winter together, I wish for each of us to shine a little harder to dispel the darkness around us.

