

Making Ripples

by Amanda Bancroft

Autumn has arrived, ready to remind us of the best and worst in life. Even as they die, leaves radiate brilliant colors for a show that often lasts all the way to the ground, not to be defeated by gravity or grass. They light up the pavement while feet trod upon them and creatures plod on around them unconcerned about the fate of a leaf. Fall is a season to carve pumpkins and count blessings, enjoy the harvest and prepare for darkness. Truly, a season of contradictions, or perhaps harmony and balance.

After all, the leaf never loses the tree from which it was born, it merely becomes mulch and joins the roots. The loss and gain we experience every fall reflects our lives year-round, especially as we try to make a difference. Our lives can seem too short, making it even more important to avoid worrying about things that don't really matter. Every day lost to distraction is a small tragedy for a world that could have gained a day of love from us.

Even larger problems pale in comparison to the great mystery of our next chapter. The broken foot, broken home, broken car, broken vows, whatever it is, whether fixable or gone for good – how can anything be larger than life itself? Regardless of philosophy or religion, reminders to be mindful are everywhere at this time of year (and open to interpretation).

Nature's forthcoming hibernation is one such reminder. In Arkansas, we mostly observe mammals and plants becoming dormant in spurts, not for the long haul. Yet rest is there, as natural as activity. Humans are primates and not designed to work like machines. (Not yet anyway, thankfully.) Productivity doesn't look as admirable when held up to what truly matters in life. Suddenly it's like cleaning the house is a symptom of sloth and having fun with the family is for the ultimate overachiever. It's ok to rest sometimes.

While autumn brings its pleasant things – the changing leaves, pumpkin lattes, spooky hay rides, feasts, football – it also brings the end of summer. Short days. Long nights. Short life. So keep it colorful, hibernate a bit when you need it, and make some ripples this season doing what truly matters to you.

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist living in an off-grid tiny house on Kessler Mountain. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer tips to those wanting to make a difference at www.MakeRipples.org.