

Maple Season

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FROM the HILLTOP



IT IS ALWAYS INTERESTING writing a column that covers activities that will be happening six months in the future. It is easier to write about the past than to predict what is actually going to happen in the future, as life seems to change ever more rapidly.

In our changing world, it is nice to be reminded that even as life progresses there is a seasonality and cyclical aspect to the natural world that sustains us. As this almanac issue starts, winter still holds us in its grasp and the shortest daylight of the year has just passed. By the end of the issue we will have passed the vernal equinox and will be celebrating Earth Day. In between is a favorite season of mine, that of maple sugaring. Although it starts in the cold of winter, the lengthening daylight and the flow of sap provides a promise of spring to come.

Maple sugaring is also a process that relies on the past, the stored starch and sugar of the previous year that serves as the food for the renewing life in the year at hand, a reminder of the cycle of life. Maple syrup is a crop that requires both the commitment of past generations and a belief in the future. A sugar maple tree may take 35 years to grow to a productive size. The maple trees that I tap, those that shade the house I live in, were planted or tended by previous generations. Those individuals were looking forward to a future that they might not experience, knowing that it would be future generations that would benefit. Maple sugaring and Earth Day remind us that what we enjoy today was the result of the efforts of previous generations and what we do today will be there for future generations to enjoy.