

CATALYST

RESOURCES FOR CREATIVE LIVING

Watching the Seasons: From The Patio Office Mourning summer's passing

By Barb Guy

There's no going back. It's chilly in the morning, chilly at dusk, barely warm enough in the shade during the heat of the day. Summer is over. Now everything changes, like it or not.

I've spent the past six months working in an outdoor office and now it's time to head inside.

Last spring on a routine visit to my favorite big-box discount store (the one that's endorsed by buyblue.org), I fell for a set of patio furniture. I kept going back to visit the set under the guise of needing a ridiculously large quantity of laundry detergent or olive oil or diet soda. But it was really the furniture I was there to see. I'd sit down on the sofa, inside the giant warehouse, dreaming about my patio as other shoppers shuffled past. Some smiled knowingly.

The woven wicker set kept calling to me. Its couch was big enough for three friends or long enough to stretch all the way out for a nap, its two comfy chairs each had its own ottoman, and in all there were 12 cushy cushions upholstered in some super-high tech fabric made to keep its color

and integrity no matter how much sun and water came its way. Throw in the matching coffee table with glass top and the whole set had me at hello.

The new furniture added another room to the house, making the patio, for the first time ever, into a wonderful place to have breakfast, visit with friends, read a book, have a party. What I didn't anticipate is how easily it would become my office as well. Besides the furniture all I needed was my laptop and the phone and then, voila-I was in business.

I had spent the entire previous winter in my home's inside "office," sitting in a chair at a desk working on a computer, my feet always freezing, the walls closing in. Then the spring came, bringing with it my wonderful furniture. For the past six months I've been working in the yard with romping dogs, watching the flowers grow and listening to birds and wind chimes. I hear laughing kids, I get intoxicated by the dazzling fragrance of potted jasmine plants, I write, I edit, I give public relations advice.

I hate to see my summer office close. I'm writing this essay on

the patio, on my wicker sofa, and it's nearly warm enough, but there's something different about the light, the air. I can already picture the cabin fever setting in. In another month there'll be little hope of taking the laptop outside, dissolving into one of the amazingly comfy chairs, putting my feet up on a cushioned ottoman, and working all afternoon.

Soon the chill, the gray, the drizzle, the falling leaves, the downright cold and snow will overtake my patio. The furniture I love so much will get wedged into the already overfull garage to hibernate for at least five whole months.

There are seasons for everything of course, and if I try hard I guess I can look fondly forward to working in front of the fireplace, wearing toasty warm socks, kitties contributing random letters as they tread across my keyboard; and once in a while I can head to a wi-fi café for an all-day cup of cocoa, but these are small consolations. I can't help it; summer's last gasps feel like whispers of impending loss.

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