

ho! ho! ho! At long last

S N O W

by Maxine Paetro

photos by Maxine Paetro

I am a native Floridian, born in Miami Beach. The first time I saw snow was from a train window when I was about twelve. I was enchanted, and I am still in love with snow.

When I bought this old house on the side of a hill, I made sure to install windows and glass-paned doors facing every direction so I could see the different aspects of my garden – but, I wasn't thinking about snow.

Today, that clean and seamless winter blanket is on my mind, because the contrast of evergreens, bare trunks and garden architecture against pure white is a wonder I hadn't planned.

After last night's snowfall, the half-dozen fifty-year old Siberian spruces beside the house are dusted with snow, making this little Cape Cod on a hillside look like a miniature in a Lionel train setting.

Below the house, red-twigged dogwoods line the southern boundary in a long curve up to the bird feeders that are staked to posts, connected with a semi-circle of rustic fencing, right outside the sunroom doors.

The boxwood planted in the cottage garden to restrain the irrepressible phlox, is a forest-green frame for the beds, and is possibly at its very best when not competing for attention with spring bulbs and late summer bloom.

The field beyond the house makes me think of Gauguin's "Garden Under Snow." At the bottom, a line of spruce trees form a backdrop for the small red barn in the mid-ground. The new pond catches an amber sunset on ice and the grasses planted at the waters' edge, are wheat-colored tufts still holding their seed heads and flying pale flags.

We know that snow has a purpose in these cold climes. It serves as mulch, keeping the soil warm, the roots moist, distributes nutrients evenly and gives the bulbs and perennials the winter rest they need to gear up for a great rallying Spring.

I need the rest, too.

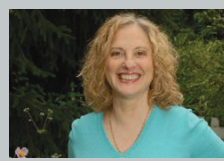
When the garden is snowbound, I can walk through it without thinking of weeds, or where to move plants to better locations. And

I'm not planning to make the next garden from a salvaged scrap of unused ground.

Yes, shoveling must be done. The oilman must be paid. Shoes must be left on a plastic mat by the door. And the baby opossums must be tipped out of the garbage pails for their own good.

But, I do love this quiet season. Cats are sleeping on the carpets and on the backs of chairs. Soup is heating on the stove. Trees throw blue shadows on the front lawn.

At long last, snow.



Maxine Paetro co-writes with author, James Patterson. Their two recent collaborations, "8th Confession" and "Swinsuit" are both NY Times best-sellers. See more of her Amenia garden, Broccoli Hall, at BroccoliHall.com.