

BED by Emily Grotta

My garden told me it's time to put it to bed.

It speaks to me through color: the brilliant oranges, pinks and yellows of the snapdragons that self-seeded in July. The cloud-white of roses. And the red of my maple. It's only four years old, but its leaves say, "look at me! See how beautiful I am. I've got many more years to please you."

How quickly time goes by.

Beginning of April I returned to our Prescott home for the first time since John died. I sat in one of our two Adirondak chairs, looking at the garden. Although a few spring bulbs were peeking out, the bare ground told me it was time to get to work.

I heard the commands:

- "Clear away the dead debris so the chives, oregano and perennial flowers s have a chance."
- "Turn over the soil."
- "Add compost."
- "Spread mulch."

It took a few days, but the beds were ready for new planting.

Mid-May I was back, with five tomato plants, two cucumber plants and a zucchini plant for the raised bed. New perennials to replace those that didn't make it.

I sat back in my Adirondak chair again, and, thought "it is good."

Now it's October, and John's chair is still empty. My hand now rests on a small urn of his ashes that sits on the table between the chairs. I ask him to see the white roses, blooming so abundantly you can hardly see the branches. They tell me to think of them when it snows and remember they will be back soon.

The zinnias, brilliant red, orange and yellow, tell me to look for them each evening in the Arizona sunset as it splashes across the mountains.

The granny smith tree that produced four bushels of apples for the food bank, still has a few apples too high for me to reach. I'll knock them down and make applesauce.

And my tomatoes, so abundant all season, had a last burst of energy producing 50 tomatoes. I will cover the soil with a blanket of mushroom compost and mulch, saying thank you for being so plentiful, and make and freeze tomato sauce so all winter long I will savor their full flavor, and be thankful.

Seasons come and seasons go. John will still be absent next year, and one season I won't be here either. But the plants, flowers and trees will grow, year after year, sharing their beauty for all the world to see.