

The Artist's Almanac

May 2004

May, Mary's month, when earth says *yes* to God.

Leaves swarm the trees and people throng celebrations on the green.. It is the time of outdoor festivals, the Steeplechase, and paintouts. The woods warbler brings its exquisite call back from Guatemala to add mystery to the jungles of Tennessee and my grandson delights in coaxing a sweet dollop from a honeysuckle bloom.

Football and basketball fade from the TV as viewers turn to golfing, fishing, softball, camping, and, at country picnics, horseshoes. The twirlers vie with the flippers, the old teach the young, and the little ones are warned out of the way.

Gardens explode with color, as dogwood, clematis, columbine, and azaleas make us forget the fading tulips and jonquils. Choirs of roses tune their harmonies, and sumptuous peonies, like full-breasted women in Rubens paintings, nod in dappled shade, challenging the painter to honor their extravagant beauty. Green shoots of corn cleave the rivened clay, and early peas and new potatoes come fresh from the garden dressed with butter as the finest of Spring fare.

Cumulus clouds tower glowing into the stratosphere and warm showers follow, obscuring the long views with luxuriant growth. The lawn demands a weekly mowing. Irises surprise us once more with their glory and we remember why they are the flower of Tennessee. Too regal to be housebroken they stand stiffly apart from each other and seem to ask, *could ever a flower have been designed with such style?*

May is the best nature can deliver, and gives us a glimpse of paradise. Ticks, tornadoes, floods and flies bring us back to earth, and the daily news and disease destroy any illusions we have about its perfection.

Still, in May, we think of how it might have been before Adam ate the apple, substituting his will for His, and we wonder: *may we imitate and glorify creation, without confusing it with the creator?*

Artists may.