

Bill Rea ? The leaves are changing

I guess it's a function of the summer that we waited a long time for this year, and the brutal heat wave that came about a month too late. The fact that last winter wasn't too bad, at least in terms of severe weather, might have played a role too.

But I have noticed the annual colour change in the leaves is a lot slower than usual. I'm sure most of you have had similar observations.

When I was a kid, my family used to take our annual holidays at an establishment on Lake Nipissing the last two weeks of summer vacation, coming home Labour Day weekend. My mother used to tell people one of the advantages of that timing is we would usually be up north for the first couple of days of September, and would be able to see the start of the leaves changing colour.

Such has not been the case this year.

Granted, there have been some changes. I was driving along Forks of the Credit Road Saturday, and noticed some spectacular views, but not quite of the magnitude I would normally expect to see this time of the year. And indeed, I would state what I saw the other day was pretty impressive, compared to other places I have been recently. It must have been. There were other cars on the road, moving very slowly, the occupants evidently taking in the colours. It just so happened that I was in a bit of a hurry, so I found the whole experience a little frustrating, but I'm hard to please.

True, my wife and I were in Terra Cotta last week, and there definite signs that the annual colour change was underway, although, again, it had not progressed very far. On the other hand, there was a lot more progress than other places I've visited of late.

There hasn't been much colour change in the southeast portions of Caledon, where I live, although there have been a few exceptional places. I've noticed some pretty nice scenes around the Palgrave area, for example. There have been a couple of others.

I had occasion to be in the west end of Toronto (my former stomping grounds) for a couple of hours Saturday. I drove through Swansea, the area where I was raised and pretended to grow up (for the benefit of those who are not familiar with the area, Swansea is just about everything between High Park and the Humber River, south of Bloor Street). True, there was a bit of change, but not that much, considering it was the weekend after Thanksgiving, and one would have expected a lot more progress.

It is true, I think, that this weekend that we just experienced wasn't the greatest when it came to taking in the fall colours. You need a certain amount of sunshine to set the colours off, and we didn't get much of that. It rained a lot.

Of course, this has been no ordinary fall.

I got a sunburn covering Bolton Fall Fair a couple of weeks ago. The heat that weekend was so oppressive that the very thought of walking from one end of the Fairgrounds to the other seemed overwhelming. I literally had to force myself a couple of times. There were things around the house that needed doing, and I simply couldn't find the energy.

And things were pretty much the same for Thanksgiving. Beth and I had some family over for dinner. It was nothing fancy. In lieu of turkey, I cooked burgers and chicken breasts on the barbecue. I think we had toyed with the idea of eating on the back deck, but we had to go inside because it was too hot. There were also too many flies and insects of a stinging nature hanging around. It was a relief to get inside, out of the heat, and we don't have air conditioning in our home.

This has been one strange year, has it not?

There are some places where the colour change has been exceptional so far, but that's only in comparison with other places.

I was sitting in Muskoka Sunday morning as I wrote some of these words, gazing out a window, taking in the colour. Granted, it was a lot better than most people in Caledon would have seen at the time, but we are already half way into October. Things should be better. Of course it was raining there too, so I realized I was not seeing the colours at their best.

But Beth and I went for a drive later in the morning, what we saw as we explored the rustic roads fell into the category of ?that's more like it.?

It was appropriately spectacular, and I think things are likely to get better as the coming weeks go by, and that's going to spread in this general direction.

So in response to those who might think I'm trying to spread gloom, I do know that things are going to get back on track, if maybe a little later than usual. All the leaves that are supposed to change colour will, eventually.

This is also not something over which I am inclined to worry, at least not much. I am sure there are going to be those who attribute the odd weather patterns of late to climate change or global warming. I have attended a couple of presentations on the topic in the last couple of weeks, and they have prompted me to do a lot of thinking. I guess those are possible causes, although not being an expert, I'm not qualified to speculate further. Suffice to say I have confidence in Nature, which has had the ultimate control over that takes place on this planet since long before I came along.

So the leaves are taking a little longer to change colours this year. It will eventually happen, just as they will eventually drop from

the trees, creating the usual complications we have all become quite good at dealing with.
And winter is coming too. What fun!

