



NOTES FROM THE CENTER

NATURE NOTES

With the first day of Spring less than one week away it is an exciting time to be at the Collins Retreat Center. Even though officially Spring does not begin for us in the Northern Hemisphere until after March 21st, we can demonstrate that this part of the world runs on a slightly different calendar.

I know that there is always something that is “new” at any time of the year, but this time of year is visibly vibrant as the plants make their return from dormancy to new life. The native plants that show off their blossoms first are: Indian plum, with its bell-like flowers hanging from the end of branches, followed by the magenta colored flowers of the salmonberry, then there is the oxalis or wood sorrel with its delicate flowers appearing between the shamrock looking foliage. We have seen the first of the Trillium beginning to display their brilliant white petals for all to see and the striking gold of the wood violets!

We also have some rhododendrons blooming. These are varieties that were planted many years ago and while the variety is not “native” the plant is a native species.

The forest floor is also beginning to recover its green sheen. The winter covering of fallen leaves and brown plant matter has already given way to a new floor covering of wood sorrel (oxalis), bleeding heart, and yes even the ferns are returning with their fiddlehead growth. And the skunk cabbage is not too far away either.

It won't be long and the smaller trees and shrubs will also be putting forth their leaves. We await the show from the vine maple, big leaf maple, alder, elderberry, red huckleberry, and others.

We have also seen the return of birds that we missed during the winter as well as the return of the small deer herd. We are eagerly awaiting the first sighting of the hummingbirds.

As I ponder all of this I wonder for myself and for you—what dream has been dormant in us that now seeks to be reawakened and brought to reality for the good of our lives as well as for the good of others? May your Spring-time awakening bring you vibrant excitement and joy.
Peace and joy to you,

Todd Bartlett
Director, Alton L. Collins Retreat Center
Creating Sacred Space for Mind, Body and Soul

MARCH 2010



Our orchard is blooming! Look forward to fresh fruit this summer.

RECIPE TESTERS

NEEDED!

Have you enjoyed the food here at the Alton L. Collins Retreat Center? Many of you have and you have asked for recipes and for us to produce a cookbook.

Our chef, Guillermo Reyes, has begun to alter the recipes to accommodate a smaller group than we usually cook for. These alterations need recipe testers to let us know if the recipes still deliver on the taste and quality that you have appreciated here.

If you would like to be a part of the recipe testing group please email Guillermo at chef_guillermo@msn.com

He will send you some recipes to try and you can let us know how they turn out. He has approximately 60 recipes ready to be tested with work on 60 more in progress!

HUMMINGBIRDS

If you have not seen our video of the humming birds from last year go to our website: www.collinsretreatcenter.org and take a look!

Orange Sour Cream Scones makes 16

2 c Unbleached Flour
1 Tbsp Baking Powder
½ tsp Baking Soda
½ tsp Salt
½ c Unsalted butter,
cubed
1 c Sour Cream
1 ea Egg yolk
¼ tsp Vanilla
1 ea Orange zest

Mix dry ingredients together, cut in butter. In a separate bowl combine wet ingredients. Blend well. Combine with dry ingredients, mix until just coming together in ball. Turn out dough on floured surface, divide in two, make ¾ inch thick, flat disks, slice each disk into 8 wedges, place on parchment lined sheet pan, bake in 325 °F oven for 8 – 10 minutes.

Optional Glaze

½ c Orange Juice
2 c Powdered Sugar
¼ c (optional) Walnuts, toasted, chopped

For orange glaze combine sugar, nuts and slowly add juice until desired thickness is achieved. Drizzle over scones.



Guillermo Reyes Chef / Food Service Manager

THANK YOU

Thank you to the members of the Metro Patchwork Society who have taken on the project of making new trivets for our dining room. It was time to retire our old trivets and this generous group was willing to put their skills to work to help us. When you eat with us in the future please admire their handiwork.

PEACE PATH COMING TO THE COLLINS RETREAT CENTER

The work has begun on the peace path! The peace pole has been selected and is waiting to be milled into a six-sided obelisk that will hold at least 12 plaques. The layout for the herb garden/labyrinth combination has been done and some of the bricks have been put in place. More brick is waiting to be cleaned. We have ordered three plaques which bear the phrase "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in the following languages: Cree, Hawaiian, and English.

If you would like to contribute to this effort you may: clean bricks, place bricks, plant herbs, buy a plaque (\$25), or cover the cost of some of the herbs (\$5 or \$10 depending upon the herb) or help with the cost of benches to be placed near the peace path or if there is another way that you would like to help let us know.

To donate now [click here](#) and you will be taken to our webpage and secure donation process.



GARDEN HAPPENINGS

Our gardening season began in January when we selected seeds for this year's crop. In our review of last year's crop we looked at how well a particular vegetable fit into the way that we are cooking in our kitchen, and how easy is it to use when it is taken right from the garden (is there a great deal of labor to clean it?) We also took into consideration that we like to think of our agricultural pursuit as a demonstration garden, that is we like to show methods to help you with your own organic produce as well as introduce you to a few things that might be unusual to you.

We suffered a great deal of loss in our bee colonies this winter. Glen Andresen, our beekeeper, believes that colony collapse is the culprit. We do still have bees and some strong colonies but we are down from last year. We will keep you posted.

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Contact us at director@relianceconnects.com or call 503.637.6411