



SEASONS OF CHANGE



Like many of you, the IFEA staff has been working from home for the last eight months. I not only know how long that has been from turning the pages on my calendar, but because my 'office desk' (formerly known as our kitchen table) looks out on our yard, and I have watched the seasons change during that time. While during a normal year, I would primarily be experiencing the yard as a weekend chore to be completed, before heading back to work each Monday. In the new safely-distanced world that we are now living in, I have gained a fresh appreciation for what I now realize I had come to view in the light of a set routine and pattern, forgetting to stop and enjoy what we have created.

Now I find myself taking daily walks; looking at the familiar from many new angles; taking photos (mentally and literally) ranging from sunsets to the floral blooms of summer to the changing leaves of fall, to enjoy myself and to share with others; and imagining new ideas and opportunities for added features, improvements, and ways that we might maximize our space in the months and years ahead, when we can safely gather with friends and family again. And as I have had more time to view the yard with new eyes, I have also gotten to know more about the many wildlife 'stakeholders' that share our space...a family (skulk) of foxes; a 'scurry' of squirrels, a real-life aviary of feathered friends; giant salamanders; and literally hundreds of tiny chorus frogs. Stakeholders that I find myself considering and incorporating into our yard 'experience' now.

So as the vibrant fall colors and falling leaves mark yet another change of seasons, into the winter months ahead, I started to think of our current challenges in terms of what I have learned from the natural world around us. 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic are like a season (admittedly, our least favorite and

longest season) that we must get through. A winter, that will ultimately turn into spring and the return of a greater sense of normalcy, the return of our festivals and events, and perhaps – like spring – with the blooming of new seeds of ideas and opportunities that may not have occurred naturally without the harsh reality of winter.

And while the change of COVID season cannot come soon enough, we don't control it, anymore than we control the natural world and seasons around us. But we do control how we use our time in the interim.

I encourage you and your team to use this time to step away from the routines and patterns that you may have gotten caught up in, unknowingly, before the pandemic began. Use this time to take a new 'walk' around your event(s); to relook at the familiar from new angles; to remind yourselves of what you have built so successfully; and to imagine new ideas and opportunities that you might create, change or add for the future, when our collective communities can all gather together again.

Revisit your stakeholders that may have changed, or been equally impacted, in your community and imagine how you might make your future event(s) more accessible and magical for them, as well. Consider our challenges as an opportunity to sharpen your tools, learn new skills, open new windows, and be prepared for a new season that – like spring – will represent a rebirth of our communities and events around the world.

And no matter the season, you can be sure that the IFEA will be here for you and your peers around the world...providing the tools, the resources, the training, the advocacy, the guidance, the support, and the global network that will ensure that we are all ready for our next season in the sun!

Make the most of all your seasons. Stay safe and healthy.