



Breathing in the Earth

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Every now and then as spring approaches and the weather warms, I catch a certain smell on the breeze, a scent of life on the verge.

For me, those momentary lapses of winter's grip propel my mind forward to activities planned and yet to plan in the garden, field and woodlot. They also pull me back in time to the smell of fresh sod being turned by the plow.

While some would plow fields in the fall after harvest, in our hills that would have invited erosion, something my conservation-minded father would not allow.

Our fields were not plowed until the spring when the earth had warmed. Only then, when the tillage could be followed immediately with planting and the seeds could quickly set roots, was my father assured the earth would be protected.

Today plows are left to rust in the woodlot of most farms. Conservation tillage and no-till are the rules of the day.

I know my dad appreciated the reduction in erosion that accompanied the change.

However, I never asked him if he missed the smell of fresh plowed earth. There is nothing quite like it. It is a clean, sweet smell of moist dirt, sliced root and overturned foliage.

It is, for those who have experienced it, the scent of life.