



Geddy Garden News



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*"While rain depends, the pensive cat gives o'er Her frolics, and pursues
her tail no more."*

Jonathan Swift

The cat is one of the animals that is credited with the ability to forecast weather conditions. I suggest that you take notice of your cat's behavior because if you notice your cat is walking with his tail straight up, you can expect an approaching wind, and if you find he is scratching your furniture more often than usual, it is an indication that there will be a change of some sort in the weather. Since I do not own a cat, I must rely on you to tell me if there is much truth to any of these beliefs.

This past summer, weather conditions varied extremely throughout the country. Some states suffered extreme record-breaking heat, accompanied by drought. That was the dangerous combination that resulted in the devastating forest fires in Montana and the western regions of our country.

It was just such a drought that was the partial cause of the dreadful Great Fire of London, on September 2, 1666. There had been no rain for over a year when the fire began, and the city of London, with all its wooden buildings, burned uncontrollably for three days and three nights, causing terrible destruction. A week later, in early October, it rained heavily for ten days straight. If that rainfall could have occurred a week sooner, it would have saved the city of London.

Here in Williamsburg this summer we, on the other hand, have experienced the opposite. We have had a rainy summer. Every time I was prepared to plant in the garden it seemed to rain. I found it annoying. In reading Esther Burr's diary of 1755, I found that she was affected emotionally by the weather. She wrote on February 1, 1755, "I feel very gloomy today, the weather is dark and black. I am so

connected with it, that it never changes but I change two." She became depressed.

Another eighteenth century diary I've been reading is that of Frances Baylor Hill of King and Queen County, VA. She repeatedly was forced to change her plans due to rain. On a good day, she wrote of some typical activities, "Sow'd a great many flower seed set a hen walked about in the garden all most all day. Sew'd on Mama's apron read & wrote." However, when it rained we find entries like the following,

"Intend'd to go to church prevent'd by the rain." April 23rd.

"The young Ladies from Riccahoc came over in the evening they were prevent'd by the rain from dining with us." July 7th.

"We had a very hard rain soon after dinner, Papa came in the hardest of it but was in the carriage and did not get wet." July 15th on an outing to Smithfield, "It rained very powerful in the evening which prevented our going home." July 16th and again on July 17th she wrote, "had a rainy evening."

On one occasion the family was forced to turn back, "We all set off to Uncle Temples but was oblig'd to turn back on account of the rain, it rain'd hard almost the whole day, and had some very severe thunder and lightning."

So, as the saying goes, into every life a little rain must fall. It seems Frances Baylor Hill had more than her share.

I finally was able to plant my fall lettuce yesterday.

Janet Guthrie

