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Cold, Colder, And Coldest!

Remember several weeks ago when we were still spending time outside in the early evening while it was still daylight? We were almost gloating over the unseasonably mild days that allowed us to catch up on some gardening odds and ends or just relax in warm, insect-free surroundings. It was nearly Thanksgiving and most days and evenings still weren't cold. A light jacket was enough to keep comfortable. As a matter of fact, I was still proudly proclaiming the fact that I had fresh parsley and chives still growing in containers on the patio ready to cut and use in the kitchen. There were even a few petunias that wouldn't quit blooming just outside the front door.

Then the month of December began, and the days got a little colder. We also had a few snow flurries here and there, just to remind us of the season. But this may have lulled us into believing we would be blessed with a very mild winter.

Now that it's January and a new year has arrived, the weather is following a new set of rules and the records are being broken. Some places in this country are calling it the coldest winter on record. On December 30th of last year, as temperatures dropped, across the ocean in the United Kingdom the online

bookmaker, Coral, was taking bets. They were counting the odds that January of this year will end as the coldest January in history! (I'd say it's a sure bet one of the winners will buy a ticket to a warm place for an extended vacation in February!)

When I think of lots of snow and severe cold weather, Alaska, or the North or South Pole usually comes to mind. However, New England's very own Mt. Washington has a reputation for being the home of some of the worse weather on the planet. On January 6th it was also the coldest place in the United States, but that's not all.

One news report said it like this: "The ambient air temperature on the summit Saturday morning (January 6th) was -36 degrees with a wind chill making it feel like 97 below." At 6,288 feet, Mount Washington in New Hampshire boasts that it is "home of the world's worst weather." The Mount Washington Observatory reported early on January 6th that the summit tied for second-coldest place on earth, with Armstrong, Ontario, Canada, at -36° F. It was just 2 degrees from the coldest locations, Yakutsk, Russia, and Eureka, Nunavut (Canadian Territory), which recorded -38°F.

I have often wondered why a mountain of such small size (Colorado's Mount Elbert is 14,440 feet) would be capable of producing such extreme conditions. Wikipedia came to my rescue. "The weather of Mount Washington is notoriously erratic. This is partly due to the convergence of several storm tracks, mainly from the Atlantic to the south, the Gulf region and the Pacific Northwest. The vertical rise of the Presidential Range, combined with its north-south orientation, makes it a sig-

nificant barrier to westerly winds. Low-pressure areas are more favorable to develop along the coastline in the winter due to the relative temperature differences between the Northeastern United States and the Atlantic Ocean."

No need to think we are being singled out for the frigid weather. I found some data from the Southeast Regional Climate Center that may be comforting. "...the following cities shivered through their record-coldest December 23 to January 5 stretch: Bangor, ME; Worcester, MA; Buffalo, NY; Flint, MI; Green Bay, WI; Duluth, MN; Rockford,

Woods and Gardens



with Phyllis Shemchuk

IL; Waterloo, IO; and Lincoln, NB. In addition, dozens of other cities from the northern Rockies to Texas to the Great Lakes and East Coast had at least a top-five-coldest two-week stretch ending January 5th, according to the SERCC. A little closer to home, the temperature for the ball drop at Times Square in New York City was only nine degrees, making it the second coldest temperature on record for the event.

So what do we make of this crazy weather pattern? Is it really climate change? Is mankind responsible for the current, erratic weather patterns, or is it just nature showing us who's in charge? That's a lot to think about, but we have several more weeks to bundle up and sit by a toasty fire or wrap up in one of grandma's warm quilts to think about it while we wait for the spring thaw.

Phyllis Shemchuk has gardened in Athol, MA for more than 30 years.

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Vampire Dreams Production Planned In Keene

THRILLER, Continued from page 5

is Kenny (Tom Bernstock), one of Floria's neediest patients, whose curiosity about Edward's nighttime habits could lead to a violent demise.

Charnas, a Hugo Award-winning science fiction and fantasy writer, often explores themes of social norms and feminism in her novels.

The Edge's production will be the first play performed in Delegation Hall, which is the renovated site of the former Cheshire County Courthouse. County officials have been making the space

available to community members for arts events, performances, classes, and other community needs, according to Cindy Stewart, project director for public awareness and development.

Performances will be at 7:30 p.m. on January 19th, 20th, 25th, 26th, and 27th and at 2 p.m. on January 21st and 28th. Tickets are \$15 for general admission and \$12 for students and seniors.

For more details or to reserve tickets, call 603-352-5657 or visit www.EdgeEnsemble.org.

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