*Back Home by Chris Hardie*

**Fawns, burdock mark spring season**

I didn’t notice the fawn until I was within 10 feet of where it lay in tall grass.

I was mowing one of our outdoor wedding venues when I spotted a reddish-brown lump. I stopped the riding mower and discovered a tiny fawn curled up in the grass.

I shut off the mower but the fawn didn’t move. It didn’t even blink and I wondered if it was alive. I crept closer and saw its tiny chest rising and falling.

Spring is the season of birth on the farm and in nature. Our farm is home to many deer; late May or early June is when does give birth.

I stopped long enough for a photo and a video of the fawn, and then drove away. Some people mistakenly think when they find a fawn that the mother has abandoned it. That’s never the case unless the mother was hit by a car or killed.

Does will leave their fawns alone for long periods of time — especially for the first few days — because newborns have no scent. When they stay motionless like the fawn I found, they are much safer from predators; predators can’t smell them. The fawn’s reddish-brown coat with its white spots provides excellent camouflage.

I knew momma deer would be back to feed the fawn. After a few days, the fawn will be strong enough to accompany its mother to roam the woods and fields foraging for food.

I left the fawn to mow a different parcel. And wouldn’t you know it, I spotted another fawn. Spotted is right, because the tiny deer with brilliant white spots was resting in the shade of a birch tree. The second fawn was older than the first; it actively watched me as I approached.

There are about 300 spots on a fawn, which begin to fade and then disappear at the end of the summer. That’s when the deer grows into its winter coat.

I moved in for a closer photo but the fawn sprang up and ran into the woods. Not too far away though, because mother was somewhere nearby.

A few hours later, I returned to the location of the first fawn to finish mowing. Sure enough, the fawn was gone. At least I noticed it. Fawns who bed down in hayfields are not as lucky this time of year.

Visit youtube.com and search for “Brambleberry Winery fawn“ to see a video of the fawn.

It won’t be long before another resident of our woods — the wild turkey — starts to hatch poults. A clutch of turkey eggs hatches within 24 hours; the poults leave the nest shortly after. Seeing a mother turkey cross the road followed by eight tiny poults is a wonderful sight.

What’s not a wonderful sight is the plethora of burdock plants that had sprouted in our vegetable garden space. We’ve been slowly reclaiming our garden space from the wilderness where burdocks were plentiful. We had a late start on planting our garden this year, and hundreds of burdock plants were growing in abundance.

The only way to eradicate burdock is to dig and pull up the long tap root. It’s a challenging job because the root usually breaks off, allowing it to grow back.

Burdock was the inspiration for the invention of Velcro. Swish inventor George de Mestral was walking his dog in 1948. He examined the burdock seeds that had become attached to his clothes and his dog’s fur. He noticed the hook system on the seeds and his research led to Velcro.

Burdock will ruin the fleece on a sheep, as we discovered one year when our sheep escaped their pen and decided to invade a patch of burdock. One sheep had so many seeds on her head that she looked like she had a burdock roller-set at the sheep salon.

The burdock root can be used for food. The root, leaf and seed have medicinal properties. According to WebMD, burdock can kill germs, reduce fever, treat colds, cancer, anorexia, stomach and intestinal complaints, joint pain, gout, bladder infections, diabetes and skin conditions — just to name a few.

I also pulled up quite a few nettles along with the burdock. I could have cooked up quite a batch of nettle soup and roasted burdock root, along with a dandelion salad as a starter.

But after two hours of bending and digging, I was tapped out and sore. Burdock root may have medicinal qualities, but it also aggravates the lower back.

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