



Apricity – The Warmth of Winter Sun

by: Stephen Liddell (found on internet)

It's freezing cold outside this morning. At 8.30am the garden is still minus 10C or 10F, the garden is covered in frost and ice and a pale blue stretches across the horizon with a very weak and watery like pale yellow sun is poking up above the horizon.

Funnily enough the weather in NW Scotland is already 10C or 50F which just goes to show how unusual our climate always is.

It's been dry but 'freezing' for a week or two now near London and I must say I like it. No matter how cold it is, so long as it is dry, not too windy and preferably sunny then that is better than a warmer and damp day, at least for me.

I've been having to feed my dragons quite a lot in the last week or two. They might look like garden birds to everyone else but I call them dragons as they flock around me as the dragons do to Khaleesi in Game of Thrones. I keep the cats away, make a varied and 'wild' environment in the garden that can sustain them through the year and when it is sub-zero or pouring down, they know that usually there will be some natural goodies for them to feast on.

Living in a terrace house, where a row of houses are joined together. The climate is actually quite different to the front of the house and the rear. The front is south facing and with a field opposite, is bathed in daylight, if not always sunshine every day of the year. I often joke that the front garden has a Cornish climate as the plants and flowers always do better here. The first flowers of spring can flower anytime from the end of January onwards but at least from February.

The back garden however is cast in shade from the houses. In the summer it gets some sunshine but from September until December, the amount of sun it receives lessens by the day until from this time of year until about February, there is no direct sunshine at all. The flowers that emerge in January in the front, appear in April or even May in the back. It is a land of usually frozen, icy and very crunchy lawns and vegetable patches though by planting trees in the right places, there are some warmer and sheltered spots. It is on days such as these that I enjoy the feeling of Apricity. To many other people, they might not even notice what it is or if you live somewhere warm, it might be hard to imagine such a thing. Apricity though is one of the nicest feelings in the world, it is when you are somewhere cold and wintery and you step out of the shade for a few minutes and get to feel the warmth of the sun on your face. Obviously, the warmth is very minimal but even today when there is ice on the ground, there will be Apricity.

I guess it depends on what you are used to. I remember once taking a family from Singapore on a London walking tour between Christmas and New Year. Somewhere near Buckingham Palace in a very wintery London park whilst the well-wrapped up and entirely frozen tourists were taking photos, I let out a nice sigh of satisfaction and spread my arms out as I found a tiny bit of sun between the shadows cast down by the trees. My tourists thought I to be crazy, there was no heat as it was frozen outside. I knew better and that tiny fraction of a degree heat increase coupled with direct sunshine made me feel like a lizard sunbathing on a rock in some hot desert location.

I always love Apricity, it is as nice if not better than the feeling of sitting in the sun in the summer. Of course, Apricity always has to end either from the weather or the environs, it is always fleeting and whimsical but to those who appreciate such things, Apricity makes you feel happy to be alive.

Apricity comes from the old Latin word *Apricitās* which means the warmth of the winter sun. In fact the fruit Apricot has the same origins as it is grown in the sun but it reached us in a very different way. It is a rare and precious word, as unfamiliar to many as those who know the feeling. We've had it since at least 1623 and such a beautiful word to match a beautiful sensation.

It is a shame, so many people don't love their language more. For knowing the word, any word, makes life so much more fun and once aware that there is a specific word to match an occurrence then you can become more aware of the occurrence too.

If you live somewhere cold, do find a way to use and experience Apricity this winter. Yes, living in the U.K. is cold and often dark in winter but I'd rather have my moments of Apricity than wall to wall sun and warmth. If you live somewhere hot and fret that you can't appreciate Apricity, at least you don't have to experience that horrid feeling when you are forced to step back into the shade.

I'm going to have lunch today in a beautiful Bloomsbury Square, I could go tomorrow when it will be milder but cloudy but you can bet that one way or the other I will find a nice spot for a hot soup in the sun, even if there is still frost on the ground.

