

The question of freedom comes up when we wonder how an impulse to action arises in us. What compels us can be regarded as necessitated by nature, or as a free decision on our part. To further complicate matters, sometimes we know why we act, and other times our actions surprise us. On the farm we prioritize the things to do, routinely change the plans, and ponder how these decisions come about.

Today I want to plant a half acre of sweet corn, plow land for planting three acres next week, hoe a half acre of spring crops, and rake over a half acre of stuff we planted five days ago. It's supposed to rain tonight. So, let's put everything in the right order.

If it rains and stays wet for two weeks, which jobs would I rather have done? This thought often pops up as I move to action. Conversely, I have to consider a possible impending drought. The condition of the soil remains a large consideration.

Getting the corn in, but not being able to harrow over it in a few days would mean a weedy mess. Plowing sooner will help get the new ground ready, two weeks from now will be late for planting those three acres. Raking over the rows can be done rather quickly and will really help keep weeds down. And all our little plants would love to have their soil tickled to let them know we care, that they can have the field and we won't allow weeds, crusty soil, or compaction to bother them.

It looks like I'll rake first, then hoe, then plow and last of all, plant. This is opposite of what I used to do. I would plant, plant, plant, and then have to hoe weeds. But if I tend what's planted first, hoeing will be much easier as the weeds haven't taken hold yet. If planting gets delayed, it won't be as detrimental as if the hoeing doesn't get done. But I sure would like to get the corn patch planted.

Of course many other factors enter in. People show up, the cows get out, a thundershower comes early, or I walk by the cold frame and decide to weed the little tomato sprouts. No, I can do that last one after a rain, and sharpening the mower blades can wait, too.

If it doesn't rain, what would I like to be done? Again, raking and hoeing come first, because that will check evaporation in the soil. The loosened soil will become a dust mulch and hold in the moisture underneath, keeping it from leaving the ground by capillary action.

Plowing will also conserve moisture, and there'll be plenty of time for planting. Generally speaking, tending what is already planted is top priority. Secondly, we need to get our ground ready for future planting. Lastly, we plant.

Farming is exciting and interesting. So many different activities are involved, all requiring thinking clearly about how life works in the soil. What is best for the soil microorganisms? Compost. Maybe I could make more compost today. How does one shut the mind off?

Hunger obviously motivates these activities, as does making a living. Beauty plays a role, I like a clean looking garden. When I supply a good quality product to my customers, I get feelings of doing something important. Which job I enjoy the most doesn't affect my motivations much. I'd rather plant corn.

One other job needs doing today. I'll have to get the weekly article written. I don't know when I'll have time for that. Why do I write it? Fame, fortune, or altruistic aims of turning the world into small, self-sufficient organic farms that feed everybody wonderful food and allow for personal freedom?

Guess I'll just go hoe and continue to watch my mind ramble on.