

Back-to-the-land movement is dead

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NEWARK — That back-to-the-land movement that seemed to be gaining momentum during the early 70's is dead. The latest figures, compiled by the Bureau of Census, indicate that folks are leaving the farm at a faster rate now than at any time in the past 15 years.

There was a time when demographers felt the migration from American farms might be reversing. The rate of loss had slowed dramatically and showed signs of turning the other way.

But then something happened, the experts don't know

Layering is cheap way to propagate

NEWARK, Del. — How would you like to add some more azaleas, rhododendrons, hollies or other broadleaf evergreens to your garden without the expense of buying new plants? There's an easy way to do this, says University of Delaware Extension horticulturist Dr. Charles Dunham — just layer existing plants.

According to Dunham, layering is one of the most successful methods of plant propagation a home gardener can use. The process is also extremely simple. Basically it involves bending down a branch from the parent plant and burying this in the ground until it forms roots.

Layering works well for a large number of plants. In addition to broadleaf evergreens, you can layer flowering shrubs such as forsythia, weigela, spirea, and many viburnums. Herbaceous perennials like phlox, bleeding heart, pinks, and many others can also be layered, rather than propagating them by cuttings or division.

This first step in layering a plant is to find a stem or branch that can be bent down to the ground. Sometimes it is possible to notch stubborn branches at the point of the bend to make them more flexible.

Bend the branch so that current growth or year-old wood near the tip touches the ground. Mark the spot on the soil where it touches.

Next, work some extra sand and peat moss into the ground at this point and scoop out a small hole about four inches deep.

Now bend the branch down and cut partly through the top side, using a slanting cut about a third or half way through the stem at the point where the roots of the new plant will form.

Give the stem a half twist to bring the tip of the branch upright. Then, using a small piece of heavy wire bent like a staple, pin the branch in the hole and cover it with the sand and peat mixture, being careful to leave the tip exposed. It may help to use a stone or brick to hold the branch in place. The tip can be tied in an upright position to a small stake if desired. This growing point will form the top of your new plant.

All the plants mentioned above can be layered when their new Spring growth hardens, which will be in mid to late June. The layers should form roots by fall. Herbaceous plants which result from layering can be cut from the parent plant and set out in the early Fall. Woody plants are probably best left until Spring when they can be cut off and moved to their new location.

Wool pool set for June 15

CARLISLE — The Cumberland Cooperative Wool Growers will hold their wool pool on June 15, from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Carlisle Fairgrounds, off Rt. 34 in Carlisle.

Producers from nearby counties are welcome to bring their wool. There are no dues or membership fees. Wool will be graded and weighed in the pooler's presence.

Penn State livestock specialists will conduct wool grading demonstrations as part of the day's activities. Also, a bulletin board will be provided for anyone to post their notices of items they have for sale. Rams, ewes, or sheep equipment may be brought along and sold from the truck.

All fleeces must be tied, using only paper fleece twine. The wool must be free of excessive moisture.

4-H horse show held

BRICKERVILLE — The Boots and Saddles 4-H Club held its 11th annual open horse show recently at the Lower Hopewell Horse Center, near Brickerville, Pa. A total of 26 classes were held.

Adult champion rider of the show was Dee Dee Rice riding her horse Miss Night Dude. Reserve champion was Jim Glick on his mount, Tri Miss Poco.

The Children's championship went to Monty Stetzer, who rode Pallida Wendy Weatheral riding Rocket Bar Forecast was named reserve champion.



quite what, that speeded migration again. In the early 70's the number of people leaving farms dipped to only 1.2 per cent a year. Then in 1974 it jumped to 5.8 per cent and has stayed there ever since. A small share of that change can be accounted for in a census procedural change, but that still leaves about half a million people who left American farms between 1975 and 1976 for reasons unknown to the census takers.

One can only speculate about why people are rushing to get away from the land. Perhaps it's the economic trend of the past couple of years. Maybe it's the high price of getting started in farming. Perhaps it's the lure of better opportunities somewhere else. The fact remains that a trend that started 60 years ago is continuing. In 1916, the peak year of U.S. farm population, one person in three lived on a farm. But today only one person in 26 lives on a farm and that's less than four per cent of the population.

If farmers are getting fewer, they are also getting younger. And although it's still not exactly a young man's game, a trend that started at least a half century ago has rather suddenly been reversed. The Bureau of Census says that in 1910 the average age of farm operators was 43½ years, but by 1970 it was slightly more than 53 years. Since then farmers have been getting younger. In 1975 the average age of farmers dipped to 50.4 years — a youthful net of almost three years since 1970.

Perhaps more significantly the number of farmers under 35 years rose from 265,000 to 358,000 and that's a gain of 35 per cent. At the same time, the number of farmers over 60 decreased 23 per cent.

So farmers are getting fewer and younger. And that's happening at a fairly rapid pace. Looking down the road a few decades, it's not too difficult to predict that America's farms will be operated by a lot fewer individuals who will be younger and who will handle much larger operations. Accompanying that trend will also be a demand for tremendous amounts of capital.

Farmers are going through an economic wringer right now that may discourage many of them. The younger ones seem to be particularly vulnerable. Maybe this will slow the youth movement in agriculture but it's doubtful that it will be any more than temporary. Young men who are growing up on the farm seem to be seeing more opportunities in agriculture than at any time in many years. The hard knocks that some of them are getting right now aren't going to hold them down too long.

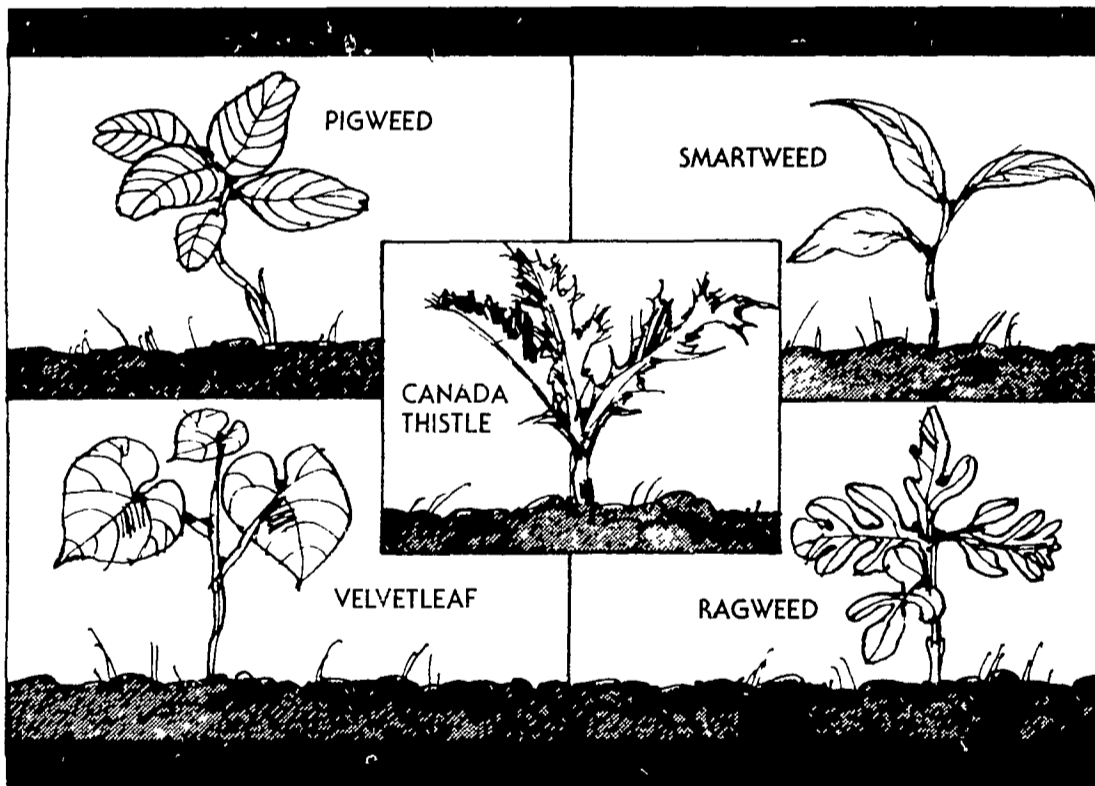
In so many situations young farmers are following in the footsteps of their dads, taking up where their fathers leave off in an expanding farm enterprise. They're heavily invested and steadfastly committed to agriculture. They have always been farmers, all of their capital is tied up in farming and all of their skills revolve around farming. If it's economically feasible, most of them plan to stay in farming.

U.S. News and World Report says farmland has been the best hedge against inflation. Comparing a variety of investments including common stocks, savings accounts, corporate bonds, and investments in urban real estate, farmland comes out way ahead. The report indicates that \$10,000 invested 10 years ago in farmland is now worth \$15,570. That's figured in 1967 dollars. During this same time, that amount of money invested in a corporate bond would be worth only \$10,420 and in common stocks only \$7,070.

Looking ahead another decade, there's no reason to believe that this same situation won't repeat itself. So don't be surprised to find the price of farmland continually increasing. Economic hard times in agriculture aren't doing much to dim the fires of enthusiasm. Although land isn't selling quite as rapidly, it also isn't selling much cheaper. The old adage about when is the best time to buy farmland seems to continue to be true — the time to buy farmland is now, for it will probably never be this inexpensive again.

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