

Ida's Notebook

Ida Risser



Our mailman delivers our mail in the early afternoon and so we usually sit down to read it after dinner. Our mailbox is about one-third full from our house and opening it often brings a surprise. It usually contains ten to fifteen pieces of mail and sometimes packages from relatives.

I'd like to share an anonymous writing that I received from Michigan. It is about a farmer, but not the usual—saying that I wish for a cow with spigots that could be turned off on Friday night. This writing is much more true to life and written in a serious vein.

"In all the world, there are no other men just like farmers. Farmers are a diminishing class of specialists who do many things well. They come in all sizes, shapes, colors, and ages. Farmers

are eternal optimists who expect that next year will bring better conditions than the floods or droughts or freezes or insect infestations they may have endured every year in the past.

"A farmer can keep a \$5,000 machine working with a piece of baling wire, an off-size bolt and the lid from an old tin can. Farmers don't belong to unions, don't have 40 hour work weeks, don't need sleeping pills and don't like neckties or fast talkers. Farmers witness the miracle of birth and the certainty of death and sense an order behind it all.

"Farmers are men who teach their sons and daughters responsibility and workmanship before the youngsters move to the city and go to work in industry. Farmers see the sunrise and walk

LANCASTER — It's nearly time to start those plants indoors that

alone under the stars; they are strengthened by faith in a higher being. Farmers are patience-in-overalls waiting for the rain to stop, for seeds to sprout, or for a calf to be born.

"Farmers are practical family men who are sincere and natural and don't try to appear as something they are not. Farmers risk all the hazards of their business and, in addition, endure the uncertainties of weather, insects, diseases and politicians.

"Farmers are persistence with a sun-bronzed face, starting again after a hail storm has wiped out a year's work. Farmers are exhaustion with 326 bales that must be lifted and hauled to the barn after dark before lying down to rest.

"Farmers are the kind of courageous, hard-working, persistent, practical, fair-minded men that other men imagine themselves to be. Finally, farmers are the brunt of jokes, the whipping boy of editors and the sacrificial lambs of politicians. In spite of all the criticism farmers get, an indication of what people really think is revealed in the fact that almost every man considers himself a farmer at heart."

will be set out during spring.

The pleasure of pampering seedlings through the doldrums of late winter need not be described to those who have done it. Nor must the frustration of seeing those new sprouts turn yellow, become spindly, or die off be dwelt on. There are many factors important to raising healthy transplants in the home. One is light.

All the varieties that might be grown indoors as transplants, including flower and especially vegetables, need a lot of light. Even a sunny, south facing window (a minimum requirement) is less than ideal because of possible temperature extremes during both day and night, and because of the bending of plants toward the "one sided" light. If you don't just happen to have a greenhouse available, an easy and effective way to provide adequate light is with two tube fluorescent fixtures ("shop lights.") Hang lights over the plant area by chains so that the height of the lights can be easily adjusted. A timing device adds a measure of convenience in using the lights. By expanding the reflecting area of the fixture with aluminum foil, a surprising number of plants can be raised under just one setup.

The value of starting plants

indoors can not really be measured in terms of dollars. The actual expenditure can, of course, be tabulated and must indicate the cost of electricity for lights.

Here is a formula for calculating that cost. First, figure out the total wattage required by adding up the wattages of the tubes being used and adding 10 more watts for each 40 watts. For example, 2-40 watt tubes require 100 watts total. $(40+40+10+10)$.

Compute the cost of using those lights as follows:

—1. Daily wattage + total wattage required x hours per day lights are used.

—2. Kilowatt hours (kwh) = daily wattage ÷ 1000.

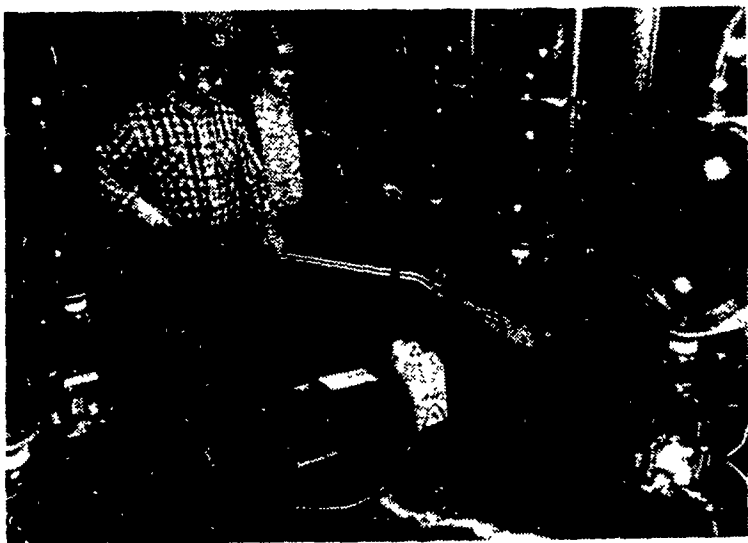
—3. Kwh per month = kwh x 30.

—4. Cost per month = kwh per month x cost per kwh.

Contact the Extension Service for more information starting plants indoors.



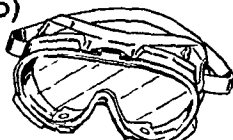
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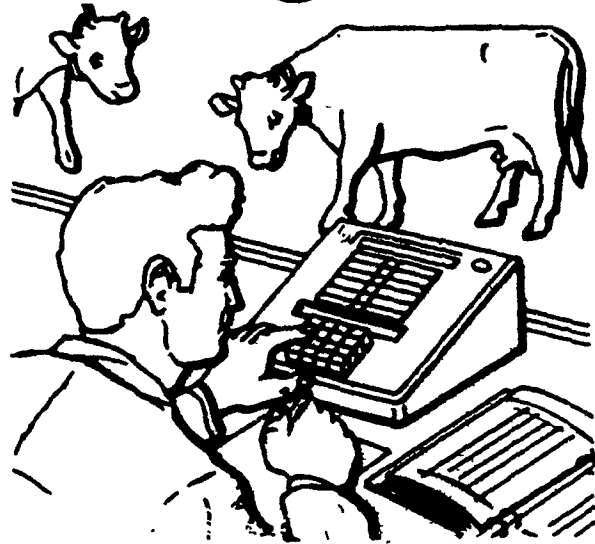


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