

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Every youngster's life oughta' have a creek running through it.

It wouldn't have to be a large stream, just a small brook that chatters its way through a pasture or a meadow.

A creek (that's pronounced "crick" in some parts) is a sort of living outdoor classroom, a microcosm of the world of live and let live, eat or be eaten, of conservation, of devastation, of adaptation to the inevitability of constant change.

Some of the most memorable days of my childhood were spent poking around the creek that gurgled and chattered through the partly-wooded, partly-grassy hollow below the woods behind our parents' home. The property through which the creek meandered was not ours, but belonged to several neighbors, and today I remember them with eternal gratitude for their tolerance of us kids and our endless adventures that centered around the brook.

Though enticing at all seasons, a meadow creek is rarely more

alive, more beautiful, more sensuous than in early springtime.

It is on the moist banks of a stream that the grass first shades to deep, vibrant green, framing the blue-sky reflections mirrored in quiet pools. Nearby, brave early dandelion blooms snuggle close against their leafy rosettes, dotting the wakening meadow with droplets of sunshine.

A creek sounds an endless chatter, murmuring as it rushes over small rocks, swelling to a small roar in a foot-high waterfall that cascades from one meadow level to the next.

Schools of tiny stream fishes dart, en masse, from deeper, sunlit pools to hide in the protective shade cast by an overhanging rock, then ease back out in the light current while an intruder watches, standing perfectly still.

Here and there, briar patches embrace the creek's edge, their spindly, thorny arms arching gracefully, over the bank and close to the clear waters. Within the tangled mass, sparrows argue and

fuss, build homes, rear their young, play out their life cycles against this meadow stagedrop.

A rabbit disappears into the same tangle, hiding in a burrow with her babies, safe from the intruding foxes that sometimes sniff and search creekside for the unwary.

Through periodic heavy rains, drought, snowmelt and freeze, the banks give way to one side, while a sand bar builds opposite, the shape and curves of a creek ever changing, yet always the same in purpose.

You can play in a creek, throw rocks in it, build dams across it, jump back and forth across it and squish home with wet sneakers from falling in it.

You can fish in a creek, search for crayfish under its rocks and momentarily be scared out of your wits by the snoozing watersnake disturbed by your poking about.

You can meditate beside a creek, rest on a rock and dabble your fingers in the cool freshness, find peace and calm, be soothed by the rippling play of sunlight and shadow as the waters pass by on their endless cycle to the sea, to the cloud, to the rainfall, and back to the stream once more.

Every kid should learn the lessons taught by a creek.

I've never outgrown my love for them. I pray I never will.



Berks Co. offers youth safety course

LEESPORT — Farm employers and parents of young farm employees should insist that youths working on farms this summer have proper training and certification.

The child labor provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, mandate that youth under 16 years of age cannot be employed in certain hazardous agricultural operations unless they have had special training and received certification. While the provisions do not apply working on farms of their parents or guardians, the training is still essential for all young farm workers.

The Berks County Extension

Service will offer an agricultural equipment safety and certification course to teach 13 to 16-year-old youth about normal working hazards involved with tractors and other farm machinery. Certificates of completion will be issued upon successful completion of the course.

The course will begin on Wednesday, March 23 at the Berks County Agricultural Center and run for five consecutive Wednesdays. Classes will run from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. (Last class on April 27 will run from 6 to 9:30 p.m.)

To enroll in the course, contact Karen Taylor at the Extension Office ((215)-378-1327) by March 16

Get jump on Gypsy Moths

EBENSBURG — Many areas of Pennsylvania are well acquainted with the Gypsy moths. Some areas will be sprayed later in the spring when the eggs have hatched; others will not. But now is the time to get a jump on them.

From now until late April the buff colored, inch-and-a-half long fuzzy egg clusters of gypsy moths are in view on bare trees. Each cluster contains several hundred eggs. They are on the undersides of tree branches, along trunks, or in protected areas.

Check the trees gypsy moths like best — apple, speckled alder, basswood, gray and river birch, hawthorne, oak, poplar and willow.

They also like black, yellow, and paper birch, cherry, chestnut, elm, black gum, hickory, hornbeam, larch, maple, and sassafras.

After finding the egg masses, paint them with creosote and leave them on the tree. Or scrape them off with a knife or a flat wood stick. If you scrape the eggs, collect and drop them into a can of kerosene or burn them until they're dead. Merely scraping the eggs off will do no good since the eggs can still hatch on the ground.

Destroying some of the gypsy moth egg clusters will be of some help in cutting down of the invasion of the destructive moths later this year.



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