

Farm Talk

by
Jerry Webb

There was a time when it was pretty well understood that as the older populations of small agricultural communities passed away, the towns would decrease in population and eventually die. But new life is returning to many of those villages.

Back in the horse and buggy days, prosperous small towns were everywhere. Limited by the speed of his horse, a farmer was forced to do his shopping no more than a day's round trip from home. And so, thriving agricultural centers developed throughout the agricultural areas.

The agricultural centers usually provided banking, equipment and sales and repair, a blacksmith, a general store, a doctor, some

governmental service along with other merchandisers. Merchants prospered and small towns grew.

Then came modern transportation. The farm truck of the early 1900's permitted farmers to reach farther for needed supplies, services and markets. The nearby general store became one of many where a farmer could shop. He no longer had to sell his produce for the best price offered by one buyer.

As agriculture grew and the farmers' demands became more sophisticated, many small town services were no longer adequate. Local implement dealers, grain elevators, and other businesses were phased out or bought by larger companies. Those that survived grew larger to meet the

demands of modern farming.

The effect on hometowns has often been devastating. On the main streets of many rural villages, stores stand empty and old vacant buildings lie in disrepair.

Super highways added to the problems of the small town. Interstates and limited access roads are a blessing to motorists, but they bypass many communities. Small towns that used to count on passing highway motorists for business are now no more than interchange signs to the hurrying traffic.

Some towns have died and will never come back. But some have managed to hold on and now a new general move back to the country is revitalizing them. Fed up with the problems of urban living, some people are moving back to small towns - even at the expense of long commutes to city jobs.

Communities that were once trade centers for strong agricultural areas are becoming bedroom communities for a commuting population. The interstate that first bypassed small towns now places them within urban commuting distance for thousands of country dwellers.

Not every rural town is within an hour's drive of a city. But many are and they're feeling the pressure of the back-to-the-country movement. In small towns of the Delmarva peninsula, new con-

struction is going on - old homes being remodeled and repaired. There is the busyness of progress. Some of the stores are still empty or occupied by a different kind of tenant. A once thriving farm supply store now offers lawn and garden supplies. A country bank now houses a boutique and the general store is now a mini-market.

Tourism is bringing prosperity

to some otherwise dying communities, but most small towns that are growing are doing so slowly and in a different way.

Farm people may find this back-to-the-country movement annoying as new neighbors seek to buy land and build on the edges of existing villages or along rural highway. It's my guess this movement is not a passing fancy. Farm folks might as well get used to it.

Peach tree borer requires annual treatment

FLEMINGTON, N.J. — In spite of its name, the peach tree borer is not just a pest of peach trees. It also attacks cherry, plum, nectarine, apricot and some ornamental trees and shrubs in the same genus. Unfortunately many people do not learn about the peach tree borer until it's too late - for their tree! The pest is so prevalent that the Extension Service recommends annual treatment of susceptible plants whether or not signs of borers are present; mid to late September is the best time.

The borers, larvae of a moth, hatch in the late summer from eggs laid at the base of host trees. They bore into the bark and feed,

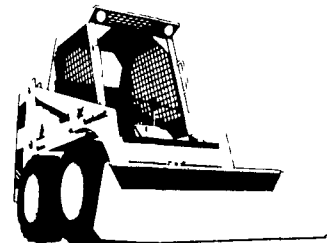
on the inner bark of trees 2-3 inches above the soil line. The presence of borers is indicated by masses of gum containing sawdust and red-brown larval droppings.

There are two very effective ways of dealing with and preventing peach tree borer infestations. One involves fumigation with paradichlorobenzene crystals (yes, the same chemical used against clothing pests.) An alternate method uses an insecticide drench of the tree trunk and surrounding soil. Hand worming, an old and still suggested control, may be helpful but is unlikely to be completely effective. The details of these methods are available from the Extension Service; call or stop by for a leaflet.

Peach tree borers probably account for the decline and death of many peach and apricot trees. This year, however, the sudden deaths of apparently healthy specimens may have been due to winter injury. The problem was severe in southern New Jersey and more common than usual in other areas.

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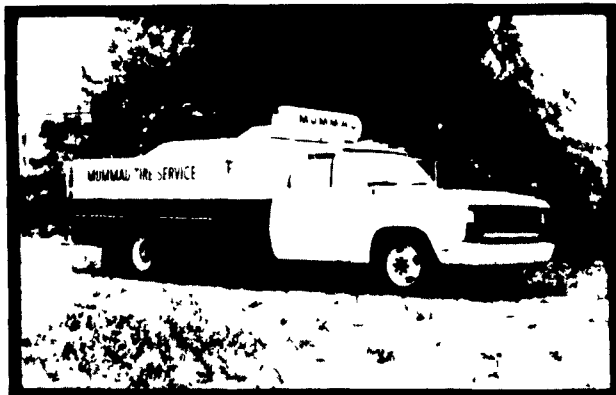


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