

# On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp



That unbe-leaf-able time of year has rolled around once again, when we must face the post-party pick-up.

The party comes with the seasonal change of the foliage, a kaleidoscope of color dancing on the breeze and waving with abandon on the wind. But, as with all parties, the gaiety fades into a pleasant memory, leaving behind the realism of residue to be cleaned up.

And so it is with the halo of gold which annually wraps around our old brick farmhouse. From stark, bare-branched, snow-laced symmetry in winter, through the delicate pale chartreuse of spring renewal, to the full-blown, shady canopy of summer, our ancient maples surrounding the house are beloved for their contributions to our comfort and quality of life.

Always the last to turn color and take flight, the maple foliage seems almost reluctant to leave. This year, perhaps because of the strange, dry season, their coloring is usually erratic. While one section of a maple is golden and fading, and some show bare branches, other parts are just as green as they were in June.

But gradually they are tumbling down, hiding the bare spots and blanketing the lawn. What I find fascinating are the individual leaves, each unique and distinct in their own ways.

It's as though they have per-

sonalities, reminiscent of people we all know.

Some leaves fall heavily, still green and pliable, as if they had been taken before their cycle was quite complete. Most fall in their full glory, floating, turning, twisting, showers of yellow and gold, hitchhiking off on a passing breeze and waving farewell. Shaded with streaks of red, lightly brushed in tinges of orange and bronze, or still daintily laced with etchings of green where their life juices flowed, they blend at short journey's end, into a brilliant groundcover mosaic.

A few cling to the tiny twigs of home, defying nature, changing from green to gold to dry, crispy brown, and still refusing to let go. Finally, overwhelmed one day by an unusually violent blast from the skies, they at last surrender. But even then, these holdouts fight to the finish, falling almost imperceptibly, riding air currents to the very last possible second before disappearing into the mass on the ground.

Those, I guess, are the ones I admire the most. The tough ones that go defiantly and make the most of even the departing adventure.

Even then, our leaves continue to enrich. Tossed in corners and piles by the wind, they provide soft, insulated beds where the dog and cats snooze in the weakening sunshine. Others snuggle around

## Entries Sought For State Sheep To Shawl Contest

HARRISBURG — Looms will be warped and treadles hobbin' in preparation for the 1987 Pennsylvania Sheep to Shawl Contest to be held Wednesday, Jan. 14, 1987 6

flowers like comforters, forming a tempering layer against freezing and thawing extremes, protection for dormant root systems from heaving out of the ground.

Finally, they'll be gathered and returned to the soil, either disked into the vegetable garden or into fields of corn stubble. Broken down, their humus feeds earthworms, loosens the soil particles, holds moisture, and ultimately improves in one tiny way the quality of our fragile earthly environment.

While the smoke of burning leaves is indeed a classic fall tradition, the act seems sacrilegious, a desecration of a natural resource that could be recycled and renewing.

Goodness. Let's hope I can remember all these positive points of fallen leaves when the day comes that I have to actually start raking them up.

to 8 p.m. at the Pennsylvania State Farm Show.

Entries are now being accepted for the sixth annual state competition, in which shearers fleece sheep, three spinners spin the lofty wool and a weaver looms a beautiful original shawl.

The Pennsylvania Sheep to Shawl contest is open to experienced teams who are Pennsylvania residents. Following the contest, finished shawls will be auctioned to the crowd at 9 p.m., with the proceeds being returned to each team.

Through recommendations of the new Sheep to Shawl Committee, premiums have been increased to \$625, with \$150 going to the first place team. A traveling trophy and plaque will be awarded to the winning team, plus a reserve champion plaque and the popular

"Team's Choice" award.

Several rule changes apply to the finished shawl. The width has been modified to 20 to 22 inches wide while the length will be 74 to 76 inches, with a minimum of five inches of fringe on each end for traditional shawls.

Shawls will be rated by a panel of three judges on the basis of Team Identification, 5 points; Shearing, 5 points; Speed, 5 points; Spinning, 35 points; Weaving, 20 points; and Design, 30 points for a total of 100 points.

Entry deadline for all teams is Dec. 1, 1986. To receive an entry form, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: SHEEP TO SHAWL, Bureau of Marketing Development, Room 302, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110 or call Joan Liesau at 717-787-5086.

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