

Ida's Notebook

Ida Risser



We are home after our trip to Alaska. I expected to give you a glowing report on all the wonderful things that we did and saw but as for now I simply don't feel that

way. Maybe by next week I'll have a different perspective.

It was an exhausting trip as we traveled over 1200 miles by bus across vast, empty, mountainous

country. Halfway through the trip I caught a bad cold; later, on the ship I got seasick. This was a trip that Allen always wanted to take and I went along.

No dedicated gardener should ever abandon his garden in the middle of the summer. I had worked so hard to have it picture-perfect before I left. And, then when I came back and saw all the weeds, worm-eaten broccoli, beetle-eaten beans, overripe cantaloupes and old sweetcorn. I simply wept.

I tried picking half of the patch of sweetcorn that had been ready a week earlier, but it was too starchy. So, I dried four pans of it and left dozens of ears on the stalks. It really bothers me as I always pick corn the day it is first ready while it is

still tender and sweet.

The beans, too, are quite mature and so I've dried some of them. Unfortunately, I forget to use dried beans in the winter and they sit in their metal cans year after year while I cook the frozen ones.

Now, as I pitch overripe cantaloupes over the fence into the corn field, I try to remember something good about our long trip and hope I'll have the heart to write about it later.

How To Buy A Watermelon

Selecting a watermelon for quality and flavor is difficult even for the most experienced shopper. No absolute formula exists, but the use of several factors in judging a watermelon increases your chances of success.

In cut watermelon look for firm juicy flesh with good red color, suggests Maryetta Dorricott, Delaware County Cooperative Extension Home Economist. Flesh should be free from white streaks and whitish seeds indicate the melon isn't ripe. Dry, mealy flesh or watery, stringy flesh are signs of

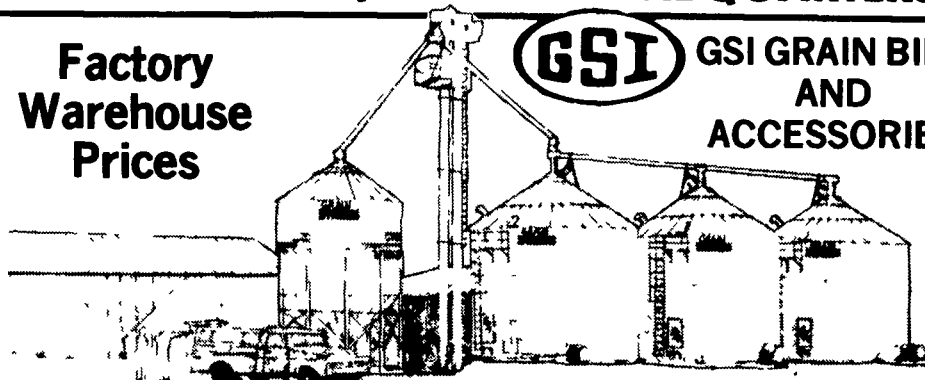
overripeness or aging after harvest.

If you are buying an uncut watermelon, you must rely only on appearance. The watermelon's surface should be smooth and the rind should have a slight dullness of dusty look. The dusty appearance is a surface "bloom" that indicates maturity. The underside or "belly" of the melon should have a creamy white to yellow color. A greenish white cast indicates that the melon isn't quiet ripe yet. The ends of the melon should be filled out. Avoid melons with misshapened or pointy ends.

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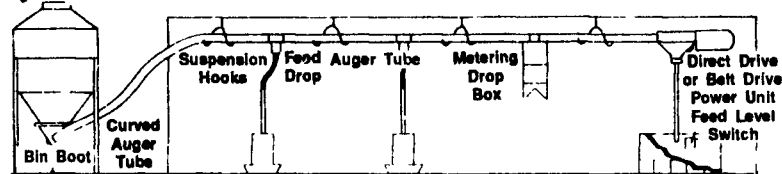
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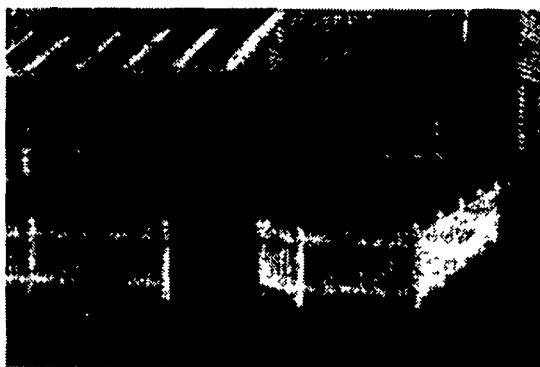
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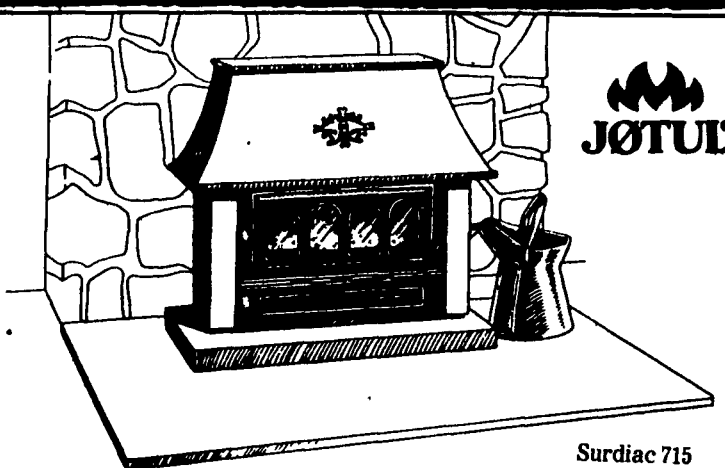
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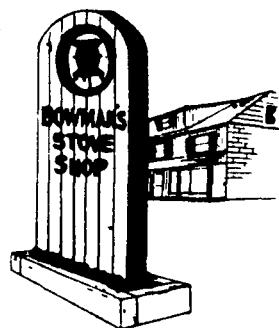
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