

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Rising in the morning to greet pitch blackness outside the windows has never been even close to making my list of ten or twenty favorite things to do.

Getting up early isn't the problem. In fact, it's usually possible to wade through more paperwork in one hour of early morning quiet than in three of "regular" day.

It's that veil of darkness beyond the windows that's the problem. Something about the way my body clock operates may interfere with my eyelids opening properly, unless at least a little light pokes through the windows.

So by this time of the year, the change from Daylight Savings

Time to Standard Time is more than welcome. Sure, it means we'll finish supper and head for the eyening chores cloaked in fast-fading light. But prying the eyes open to get an early start on the day comes easier.

Perhaps it's the naturally decreasing period of daylight in the fall that makes the hours of brightness seem more alive and vivid with color than at any other time of the year. Nature seems bound to stockpile an extra boost of beauty against the impending hibernation, the dormancy, the starkness of winter.

Swept clean of summer haze and humidity by the brisk winds of

the season, the countryside air is flavored with a crisp, snappy flavor. Rarely is the sky a more intense, clear, deep blue than now. Against it as a backdrop, the old bank barn looks a more vivid red, the maples glow a deeper yellow-gold, and the fields of next year's barley crop show a thick, healthy green growth.

Diminished by earlier brushes with frost are the heat-lovers of the garden - cantaloupe vines and the lush foliage of the choicest tomato plants. But what's left tries harder.

In a neighbor's garden, higher on the hill than ours, pepper plants are rapidly coloring their remaining small fruits a brilliant scarlet, visible even from the highway. And the ends of ears of corn, peeking out from their sheathing of protective husk, dot fields of drying stalks with glints of gold.

Ornamental cabbage plants, shared by a close friend, have spread the umbrella-size on a bank near the patio. Some boast dainty, lacy centers of mottled green and white, while two of a royal purple variety have fattened compact heads at their middles. Those diminutive heads with probably eventually ornament the table, adding their chill-sweetened flavor and gorgeous color to salad or slaw.

Clusters of color accent the perennial border between house and barn, a collection added to regularly, but never likely to be complete. An assortment of hardy chrysanthemums flourishes there, despite adverse conditions that might even wipe out an occasional weed.

Cows tied to the split rail for pre-show cleanups sometimes stomp the clusters. Kittens play hide-n-seek through their stems and the chickens scratch for bugs and dustbaths at their roots. Bedding sawdust coats their leaves as the loader tractor goes past enroute to the barn. Occasionally a bale of hay topples off a wagon and bounces from the blacktop over onto a cluster.

Still, these traditional long-lasting blooms of fall endure, pro-

viding much pleasure for few demands. August brings the opening of an early blooming, spoon-petaled yellow, while the durable maroon flowers of another often linger on through Thanksgiving and the first snowfall.

You can almost set - back one hour, please - the clock by the time these last flowers of the year unfold. They usher in a small slot of the year between trick-or-treat and turkey feasts, a time personified by cider and gingersnaps, woodstove smoke and burning leaves.

And, when the maroon mums spread their first blossom to the October sunshine, we know there will be at least one morning on which it will be easier to wake up.

If only there was some simple way to explain it to the cows.

Fall Homemaker's Day For Lycoming County

WILLIAMSPORT (Lycoming Co.)— Fall Homemaker's Day will be held on Thursday, November 9, at the Pine Street United Methodist Church, 441 Pine Street, Williamsport. "Celebrate 75 Years" is the theme. There will

be two fashion shows.

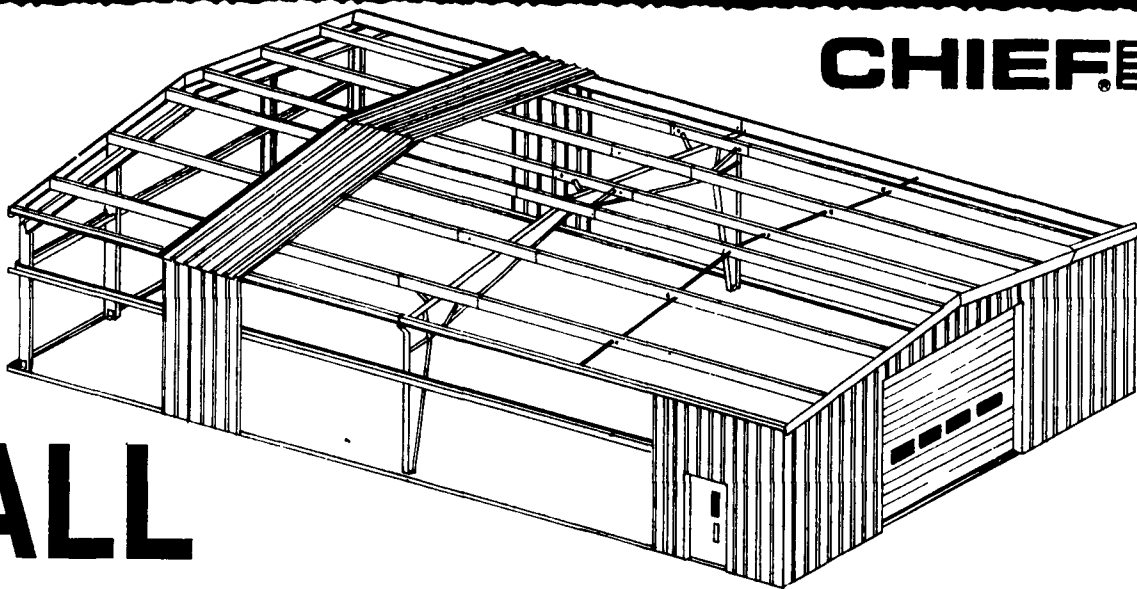
1. "Past" which will include hand sewn and ready made outfits from past years.

2. "Present". Woolrich Woolen Mills will provide outfits.

A catered lunch will be serve at noon.

Highlighting the day will be the featured speaker, Vernon Ross from the Department of Agriculture, who will talk on "Agriculture & Nutrition." The grand finale will be recognition of volunteer leaders for their service to Lycoming County Cooperative Extension.

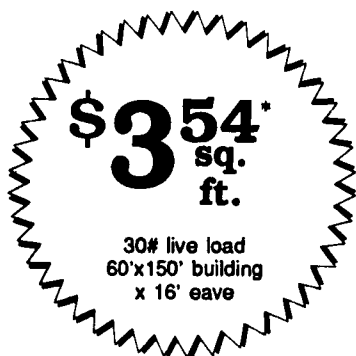
Reservation deadline is October 31. Make check payable to "Lycoming County Extension" in the amount of \$5 per person and mail to: Fall Homemaker's Day, Lycoming County Extension Office, Room 406, Courthouse, 48 West Third Street, Williamsport, PA 17701.



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