

**On being  
a farm wife  
- And other  
hazards**

**Joyce Bupp**



Attention. Your attention, please.

We interrupt this regularly-scheduled column with an emergency announcement.

Dandelions have been spotted blooming in southern York County. Repeat, dandelions have been spotted blooming in southern York County. In the event of a full-scale explosion of these yellow-headed invaders, sirens will sound and you should stay tuned to local stations for further emergency information.

Egads! Weeds already? Defi-

nately an emergency. Bad enough that the residue of last season's weeds still litter the garden, without the added insult of fresh dandelions already on the move.

And I don't even have all my seed catalog orders mailed off yet. One went on its way last week, but at least another is still in the planning stage.

Admittedly, the emergence one sunny afternoon two weeks ago of about a half-dozen cheery, yellow dandelion blooms scattered on the south slope of the lawn prodded me into action with a full-blown

dose of spring fever. One immediate remedy was to quickly toast a small batch of soil in the microwave and poke into it the few tomato seeds on hand in my sparse inventory of seed packets.

Another response was to gather the fistful of seed catalogs piling up on a kitchen chair and get serious about the reality that six weeks of this year are already history.

Ten cherry-tomato seedlings are now sprouting their first set of true leaves. A planting of snapdragon seeds is just emerging. And, daily I haunt the mailbox, awaiting shipment of the major supply of raw materials for an upcoming season of pleasure and pain in the planting patch.

Once upon a time, the perfection of pictures and lavish use of adjectives -- like "brilliant," "glorious," "enormous," "stunning," "sweetest," and "giant" -- suckered me into believing I could get results at least faintly resembling those glossy, colored ones in the catalogs. You know -- nary a bug, nary a weed, nary a rot spot on anything.

Just the fact that the folks in the picture-perfect catalog gardens

never have dirty knees or wore muddy, scruffy sneakers should have alerted me to the fantasy of it all.

Experience, laced with at least one annual disappointment over some "New!, Improved!" something or other, has tempered those illusions. Now, mostly tried-and-true varieties go on my order, stuff that has proved its mettle through years of drought, periodic floods, bug-chasing chickens and frequent patrol by our posse of cats.

So Early Girl and Rutgers tomatoes are on the list, varieties which have never failed to perform acceptably even in weather extremes. Long-Keeper tomatoes went on the list, too, despite two years of problems. Problems were not with the seed, but the seed-er. First year I lost the pack of seeds. Last year, I planted the seedlings out too late. Or frost came too early.

Burpee's Hybrid cantaloupe has been another ever-dependable variety in our garden. Even last

season, when rain and lack of sunshine turned another variety into tasteless mush, it yielded firm, sweet breakfast fare.

And, not to forget our favorite string bean, the Royalty strain. These bright-purple beans which turn green after a minute or two in boiling water are great fun to share with skeptical friends. Disbelievers are convinced the moment they boil their first batch of these "magic" veggies. Plus, they're delicious, freeze well, and their purple color is a turn-off to bean beetles.

Just for fun, the order included a pack of miniature pumpkin seeds, a decorative-type the size of a small gourd. One catalog whimsically suggests scooping out the insides of these and using the shells as dessert dishes.

Right. The day I do that my family will know I've shed one too many old brain cells.

Probably the result of shock from having dandelions bloom in January.

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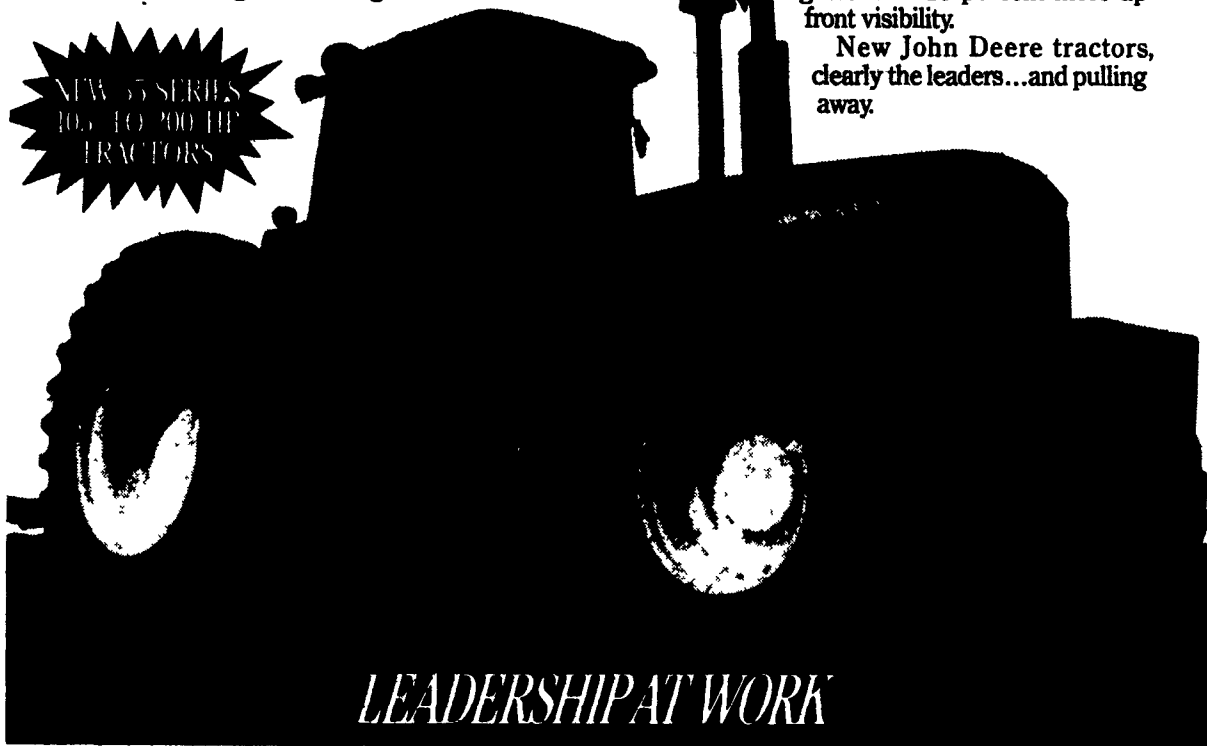
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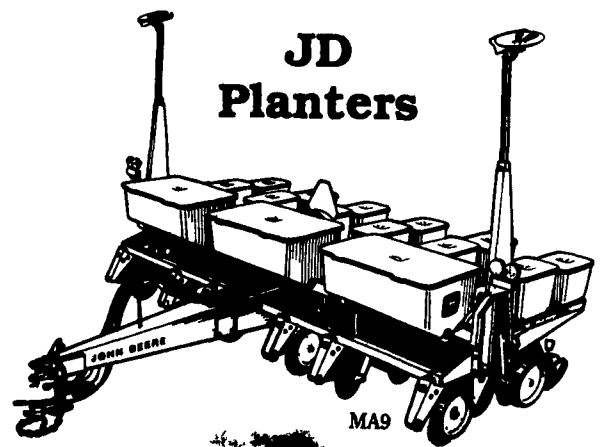
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