

Ida's Notebook

Ida Risser

With several quite warm days in a row, spring seems to have arrived with a bang. Crocuses are popping up all over the front yard. Some are yellow, some violet and some a deep purple. Even the forsythia bushes behind the barn have burst into bloom. Those near our house have had all of their buds eaten off by the sparrows.

Last week was the Philadelphia Flower Show and my daughter-in-law, Lisa, and I went with a bus tour. Many people attended and it was difficult to get close to the beautiful exhibits. Some had names like, "Harmony in Design" or "Perennial Garden." These included herb gardens, wildflower gardens and rose gardens. There were lectures that could be attended. Some exhibits included waterfalls, old buildings and lots of statues. Many miniature bouquets were displayed in addition to pretty table settings.

After a lunch in the nearby crowded cafeteria, we boarded our bus for a trip to downtown Philadelphia to do some shopping. You can have your choice of large department stores or small specialty shops. So whether you want shoes, books or another bite to eat, they can accommodate you.

Later in the afternoon, as we sat in the sun to wait for our bus, we simply watched the people hurrying by. Well dressed men and women who hopped into nearby taxis and poorly dressed ones who dug through trash barrels. As we listened to the loud sirens of police cars and fire engines whizzing past us, I couldn't help but compare it to our relatively quiet life on the farm. One of the pleasures of living here is being able to hear yourself think. And, another plus is the river gently flowing downstream to the mill dam. It was quite a contrast.

Egg salad makes a versatile, yet easy, recipe for young chefs to try. Kids can use an egg slicer to safely chop the cooked eggs. They simply slice the eggs one way, then turn them around and slice the other way. Imaginations can

run wild with stir-in possibilities. The final concoction can be scooped into baked potato skins, or cooked large pasta shells, or spread onto mini bagels, English muffin halves or even toasted waffles!

Blossoming Alternatives

(Continued from Page B2)

being raised by Maryland farmers. Healy continues developing field cut flower production practices that require minimal amounts of labor and pesticide applications, concentrating on asters, snapdragons and Celosia, as well as larkspur and other members of the Delphinium genus. He also focuses on water, nutrient and pesticide management.

Precise water application is critical to maximizing stem elongation of developing flowers," Healy said. "This is important, since cut flowers are sold based on stem length."

Working with researchers at the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station's Salisbury and Upper Marlboro facilities, Healy conducts herbicide trials to determine the best weed and insect control methods. This portion of his project aims to minimize pesticide applications through the use of targeted spraying and beneficial insect predators.

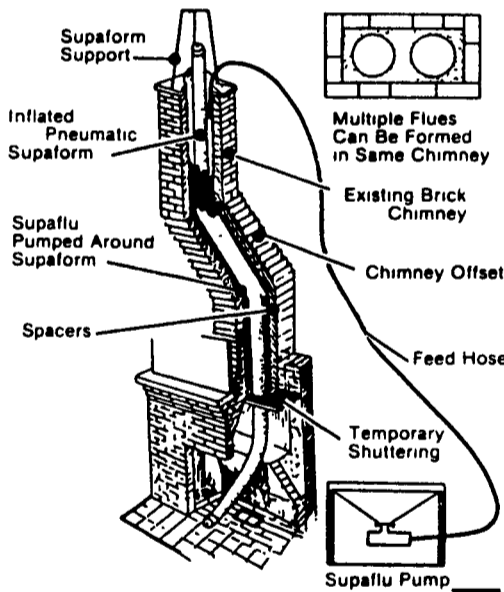
One final production-related effort involves evaluating peak harvesting times using a heat unit technique. This method measures the number of degree days - a unit based on the standard average daily temperature - that pass before flowering occurs.

"Once peak flowering dates are known," Healy said, "growers can develop a marketing strategy that allows them to offer cut flowers throughout the growing season."



Although Maryland florists purchase \$100 million of floricultural products annually, three-fourths of these products are imported. Dr. Will Healy, shown here with a clerk at Behnke Nurseries in Beltsville, believes Maryland farmers can obtain supplemental income by filling this supply niche. Healy, a University of Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station horticulturist, has field-tested and evaluated more than 150 cut flower cultivars since 1987. Photo Eric Kieley, Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station.

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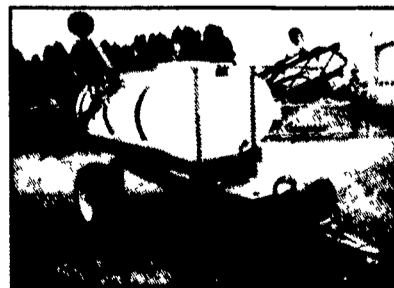
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