

# May Day Fest Renews Medieval Customs

**LOU ANN GOOD**  
Lancaster Farming Staff

their uses. Visitors could tour the herb gardens and buy herbs to plant in their own gardens.

**BLUE BALL (Lancaster Co.)**  
— Visitors at the May Day Fest held at the Village Herb Shop in Blue Ball observed medieval customs of celebrating one of the world's oldest holidays.

According to Pat Dyer, manager of the Village Herb Shop, May Day was the world's oldest and most widely celebrated holidays in ancient times.

It was a time to welcome spring-time and rejoice in the renewal of nature. The joy and thankfulness that people felt with the advent of spring was acted out with dancing and flower gathering.

One of the most widely practiced traditions was decorating the Maypole. The Maypole was usually a tree, a symbol of nature's fertility and vitality. The Maypole was decorated with flowers and ribbons, which two rows of costumed dancers grasped and wove in and out while moving in opposite directions.

The merry-making included an activity known as "bringing in the May." Before dawn on May Day, people would go out in the woods and gather boughs of hawthorn, also known as May or Mayblossom to decorate their homes. Women who wanted to look young bathed their faces in the morning dew.

Young girls wove leaves and flowers in their hair and went from door to door singing. They arranged May baskets of flowers to hang anonymously on neighbors' door knobs.

Suitors picked wildflowers to make nosegays for their sweethearts' May baskets.

The festivities included outdoor and indoor displays of herbs and

Displays included instructions on how to dry and arrange herbs on notecards and pictures. Workshops instructed participants on how to arrange tussie mussies or nosegays. Nosegays or tussie-mussies date back to the days in England when flowers and herbs were carried in tight bunches and held to the nose to block out offending odors.

According to instructor Ruth Pankuch, the miniature arrangements were originally carried in medieval times. "People didn't bath and sewage ran through the streets so people pressed the nosegays against their noses when confronted with an offensive odor," she said.

Victorian nosegays included clusters of herbs recommended by physicians to revive those who felt faint or as a means of warding off diseases.

The nosegays often were used to convey a sentiment because flowers and herbs were assigned meanings. If a lady had a fight with her boyfriend, her bouquet might include the herb tansy, which meant hostility or a declaration of war against him. A rose meant love and was often used as the central flower in the nosegay.

Fresh or dried flowers and herbs can be used to make tussie mussies or nosegays. If fresh flowers are used, cut and set in water to condition them before arranging.

**Directions for Nosegays**  
**Materials:**  
Scissors  
One central flower with a 4- to 6-inch stem



Helen Gruber, left, and Addie Bauman, both of Bernville, displayed their handiwork with what they call "Nature's Jewels." The women use pressed flowers, herbs, and greens to make notecards, pictures, bookmarks, and assorted gifts.

Other flowers, herbs, and leaves, as desired, with a 4- to 6-inch stem

6-inch diameter paper doily  
Floral tape

3/8-inch wide ribbon, enough to make desired bows and streamers.


Holding a central flower in one hand, surround it with other flowers, herbs, or leaves. Chamomile, Forget-Me-Nots, Lamb's Ears, were used during the workshop. Foliage should be stripped off stems. Enlarge the bouquet until it is the size desired. Wrap stems with floral tape. Trim off stems evenly.

Cut an X in the center of the doily and insert flowers.

Tie with ribbon streamers and bows, if desired.



Dianne Winters, right, Strasburg, and Ruth Pankuch, New Holland, taught workshops on making tussie mussies, more commonly known as nosegay bouquets.



**Ida's  
Notebook**

**Ida Risser**

When we traveled south to visit our children, we stopped to see Skyline Caverns in Virginia. They were only recently discovered by a scientist in 1937. These caverns have subterranean streams and cascades. They also contain calcite formations known as anthodites or cave flowers, the only ones of this type in the world.

After driving for 500 miles we stopped for the night in Bristol, Virginia. The next day we drove through the Great Smokey Mountains. Trees and plants were blooming and we stopped to take several short hikes to see waterfalls. After we drove seven miles up a mountain peak to a tower, Allen climbed to a point more than 6,000 feet elevation. These mountains are enveloped in a haze and are richly forested. There are

restored historic farm buildings at one end of the park which straddles Tennessee and North Carolina.

That night we arrived in Atlanta, Georgia, where our son and daughter live with their families. The next day was Easter and 17 people gathered at one table for a meal of lamb. Having six grandchildren together at one time for an Easter egg hunt was unusual and also a noisy affair.

The next day the whole group, including a 10-month-old, two 2-year-olds, a 3-year-old, a 5-year-old, and an 11-year-old (plus we older grandparents) took a cable car up Stone Mountain. It is 825 feet high and has the faces of Davis, Lee, and Jackson carved on it — with their horses. I do not know just how we managed but



Four FoodWatch volunteers were honored for leadership and support in building public confidence in the food and agriculture industry. From left: Phil Koch, Ciba-Geigy Corp.; Dale Darling, DuPont Agricultural Products; Wm. Patrick Nichols, Agriculture Council of America; and Dick Foell, ICI Americas Inc.; have given hundreds of speeches in behalf of FoodWatch and have developed matching funds programs benefiting FoodWatch, a national public education and awareness program designed to build public confidence in the food and agriculture industry.

we walked or ran down this mountain with the baby in a backpack. The one two-year-old girl ran the

whole way down by herself over big, round rocks and was a sight to see. We older folks carefully

picked our way down to a train which took us to our parking lot.