

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Warning.
What you are about to read could disturb you... could alarm you... could intimidate you.

If you become easily upset, please turn the page and read something else. If you're feeling brave, well, here goes...

Busy at work in her farm home, my mother-in-law had her mind on a dozen different things.

Like most of us, her hands are busy with one group of jobs while her thoughts addressed other issues.

And, again like most of us, in

her own home, surrounded by her own familiar things, on her own turf, she was so familiar with the setting that it just wasn't necessary to pay attention to the details of the area in which she was physically working.

Until she found herself - so to speak - eyeball to eyeball with a snake.

A snake.

In her own kitchen. That's right. Her kitchen.

Maybe it's just my imagination, but snakes seem to be on the increase in recent years. We have

a couple of spots around the farm where we just automatically look before we walk, due to their being regular hangouts for our local reptiles. I stepped on the pond deck the other afternoon just in time to watch our excessively-chubby resident water snake slither out of the springhouse wall and launch herself (her, we think) off into the water. Probably in search of a fat frog for dinner.

Snakes at the springhouse are one thing.

A snake in your kitchen is a whole different issue.

Actually, the fairly large reptile slithered under her stove, out the other corner and disappeared through a crack in the toe space area within a few seconds, leaving my mother-in-law standing in the middle of her recently remodeled country kitchen in absolute, stunned shock.

Followed by the REALLY scary part.

Where had it come from? Where did it go?

And... what were its intentions? Not having any of those answers (and not really expecting to get them from one now-departed snake), my mother-in-

law uneasily set about on a plan of action to at least try to determine if the elusive critter had just passed through or planned to hang around.

She laid newspaper all over her kitchen floor. And then sprinkled flour over the newspapers. And shared the incident with friends in hopes of suggestions with which she might eliminate the threat of the unknown, so to speak.

One suggestion - just not going back home - was not a workable one.

"I'll deal with it," she sighed as she talked about it. "I don't like it, but I'll deal with it."

Less than a day later, a young friend stopped by with the news that he and his wife had just bought a piece of farm property. The land lays in a valley through which runs one of the county's larger streams.

Also considering the same piece of property had been another couple looking for a country place

to call home. But when they had gone walking near the stream in the meadow - and spied a snake - the wife made clear her intent to move nowhere even close to where a snake existed.

Numerous conclusions could be drawn from these two snake tales.

Mine is to have yet more admiration for the resilience of a farm widow who "deals with" both the pleasant and unpleasant surprises in her life without extreme panic and manages to retain a sense of humor through it.

Several days later, the snake's whereabouts were still unknown and the flowered paper had been removed after nary a sign of tell-tale tracks.

Reaching into a lower cupboard for an onion, I remember two instances of baby snakes turning up inside our own stone-foundation farmhouse.

And reach a little more carefully the next time.

Go a Little Wacky With Your Weeds

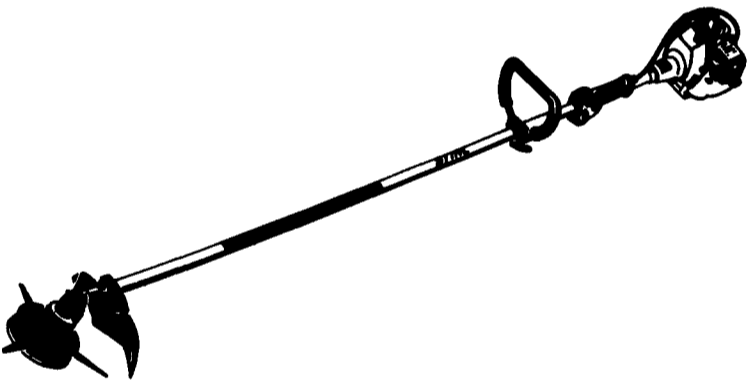
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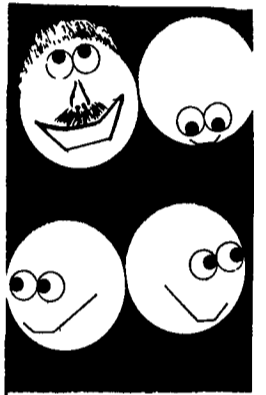


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