

# On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Maybe we just haven't hit the dial right yet.

Because, on the "big screen" view of the world beyond the kitchen window, the color picture won't come in. Indeed, we seem to be locked into receiving transmissions in monochromatic shades of brown.

Not that brown isn't a pretty color.

Those subtle hues of autumn browns, from pale golds to the stately, leathery-look of the oaks, make fall such a beautiful season.

Chocolate-candy-brown is a hands-down favorite. And the soft brown shades in the coats of Solomon, our Sheltie member of the family, and Butch, the beige and black tiger cat, stir admiration.

But brown has dominated the outside landscape for months, stretching across the horizon and around the contours. Various shades — all brown — delineated fields of corn stubble, dormant alfalfa stands — even plantings of barley and wheat, the living

growth stunted and pale from harsh, cold winter winds.

Woodlots are a blend of deep brown and black, each bare trunk and limb adding its own distinct bark tone to the shading. Meadow grasses lay dormant in beige colors, matching the hue of the ring of dead cattail stalks rimming the pond.

Of course, we had a dramatic color-reception change there the other week as the brown was wiped out by transmissions in solid white — and buried us under drifts for a week.

Eventually that enhanced the brown tones outside the window, as a single passage of a tractor churned the melting mess on the field road to pure ooze mud. Equipment tires transferred that same muddy shade to the road and driveways around the buildings.

A dozen escaped heifers out cavorting one night after dark pockmarked the soggy yard with brown tracks, creating neat little hoof-shaped puddles for the rain.

And not too surprisingly, brown handprints added color contrast on one of the salmon-colored bathroom towels. Telltale evidence, requiring no need to take fingerprints to track the muddy party.

Still, as the white gave way back to brown, hints of a renewed color picture on the world's big screen view offer optimistic promise.

Slender slivers of green are poking through the dormant lawn, frontrunners of the growth that will have us hauling lawnmowers out of storage before we know it.

Weeping willows, their drooping limbs still barren of leafy green, take on a golden color with the lengthening, warming days. Peach orchards likewise blush with a reddish tint as the sap begins to flow.

Our prized pussywillow has opened furry-soft gray blooms, later than in many recent springs, but always a welcome harbinger of renewed plant life.

Perennials are pushing aside the brown mulch of last year's maple leaves, making way for fledgling foliage eager to bask in sunshine. Columbines, daylilies, chrysanthemum and peonies have begun filling formerly bare spots in the border. Winter-killed tips of iris fade behind new sheath-like leaves that shoot up from gnarly rhizomes anchored only halfway in the ground.

The rose canes color as they begin to stir toward fulfilling their promise of fragrant June blooms. And clumps of daffodils in sheltered corners wave tight, green buds just waiting to burst into yellow glory after a couple of warm afternoons.

Let's keep fiddling with that big screen dial.

The color's already starting to brighten a bit.

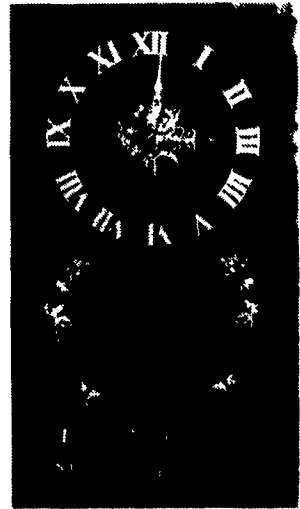
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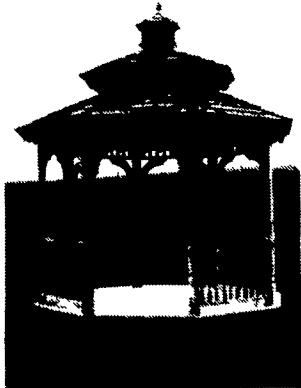
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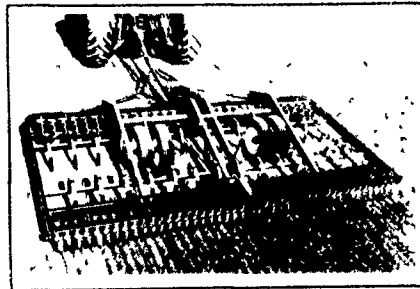
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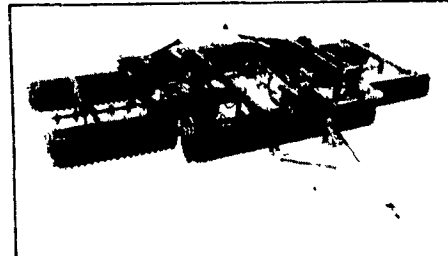
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