

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Why, hello there. And welcome!

We're so pleased you've come to visit Ye Olde Farmstead Water Gardens.

Sit down and relax a few moments, while we share some brief background on this attraction. Then we'll take the walking tour.

You did bring your boots, didn't you?

History of the gardens goes back hundreds of years, though our knowledge of that period is understandably sketchy. At one time, we believe, they were part of

the endless hardwoods which covered the eastern part of the United States (before asphalt was invented.)

Though no Indian artifacts have ever been unearthed here (only old bottles dug from the flower beds), it's possible that American natives and pioneers alike probably passed through the vicinity. Perhaps they even paused to drink from the spring which bubbles up on the boundary our present Gardens.

Thanks to a current climatological gliche, the dependable spring, which has never failed through

repeated droughts, has been joined by numerous smaller groundwater outlets in the surrounding half-acre or so.

This creation of Mother Nature you're now entering is Ye Old Farmstead Water Gardens, not open for visitors since the post-Hurricane-Agnes-era, June, 1972. In other years, the Gardens has been devoted to lawn, floral and vegetable culture.

To your right is the Pussywillow Shady Niche, with daffodils, tulips and lily-of-the-valley following the pussywillow into bloom. Large, old plantings of hosta fill the cool, damp bed through the summer months. Yes, the water standing there is nature's answer to a landscaping feature we tried adding many years ago- a small waterlily pool, which leaked after just a few seasons.

You're now standing in the midst of the Birdfeeding Center, which recently underwent seasonal renovation. Several large, wind-broken limbs of maple and corkscrew willow, moved here for songbird feeding cover through the winter, have since been recycled to the firewood stack.

Cleanup of this area will be completed as soon as the waters

reside enough to retrieve the remaining cut lumbs and brush without donning hipboots.

Beyond the Norway Spruce and to your left is the Forsythia Border, a thick planting of shrubs to hold and beautify the steep bank from the road fo the former back lawn. A new addition to this shrubby bank are the small springs which ooze up at the forsythias' feet, enabling the many small birds which take refuge here to drink right at their doorstep.;

This addition of springs added the new Gardens feature which spreads before you, into the perennial border and beyond. We call it the Squishy Swamp, a favorite attraction to little kids because of the waters which squirt up with every step.

Squishy Swamp is avoided by the dog, who hates to get his feet wet unless he's stopping through a stream on a hot summer day. This

area offers visitors a sports challenge called Hopping From Clump To Clump Because You Came Through Wearing Sneakers. We warned you about needing boots.

At the farthest edge of Squishy Swamp is the Blueberry Bog. This addition is not yet a year old, having just been added last May. There should be no need to plan for irrigation in the immediate future for the blueberries.

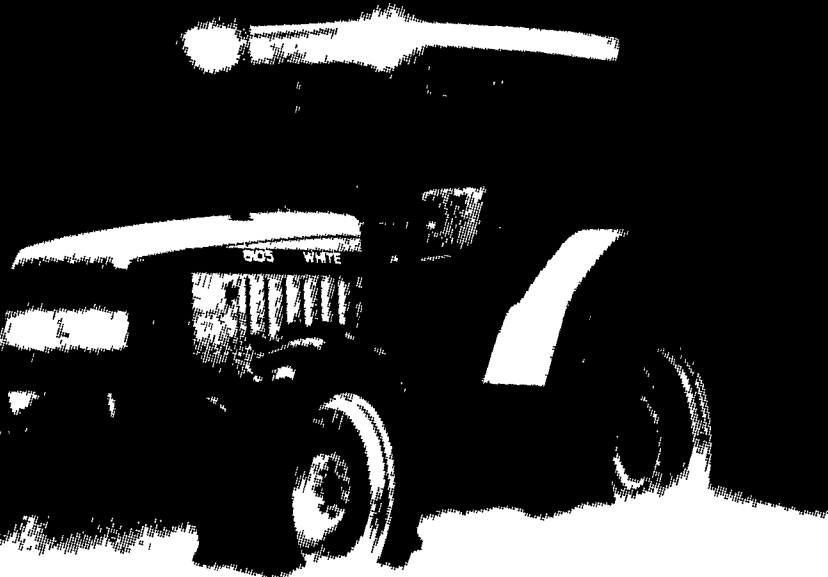
Crowning jewels of Ye Olde Farmstead Water Gardens are the twin brooks babbling on either side of the vegetable garden. Source of the flows are a conservation terrace in the hill fields, drained underground to empty through a grass waterway beyond the yard, and springs which opened above the garden patch.

Plan your visit soon. If the weather holds, we may convert to Ye Olde Farmstead Rice Paddy.



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