

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Little surprises dropping into our everyday lives are the sprinkles on the ice-cream-cone of life.

Some provide momentary flashes of joy and memories to be savored- a bouquet of dandelions lovingly offered in the chubby hands of a beloved child, a whiff of mint stirred while walking in the meadow, a falling star, some special thoughtfulness of a friend.

Other surprises physically linger for longer periods of time- the Mother's Day climbing rosebush now eight-feet tall and growing, an unexpected wax-job for the car, the geese that accept us as neighbors during their six-month annual visit at the pond, a cluster of red tulips you forgot you planted last fall.

And then there's Butch.

Butch nearly got stepped on the first time we met. I was high-tailing it around the corner of the garage, late for morning calf feeding. He was hanging around the same corner, a stranger who showed up on the farm from....good question. He's never shared that secret of his past; we suspect some cowardly pet owner who couldn't bother spaying their cat dropped off this "donation."

When I reached down to pick up this few-ounce, mewing, bundle of striped dark tiger kitten, he snuggled against my neck. Rubbed my cheek. And promptly stole my heart.

Butch is a "people" cat; he hasn't yet met a human he doesn't like. Solomon the dog tangles with him on occasion. And he'll slip into the house any chance he gets to intimidate Monk, the housecat, into hiding behind the couch while he chows down her catfood.

Even while a kitten, Butch established his reputation as a busybody and a climber. If I'm throwing down hay for heifers, Butch will be sniffing around the bales in the haymow. He instinctively knows which bale I'll toss down next, and parks himself on it.

When the calves are getting bot-

les, Butch strolls along the tops of their pen gates. And, when I'm washing bottles at the sink, Butch hops up on a bucket of lime kept handy for disinfecting pens and paws my knee if I haven't yet fed him and his feline pals their breakfast.

Butch accompanies us to the ponds, to the garden and hangs around the shop with whoever's working there, often perching himself high up on a tractor seat to observe the proceedings- and the sparrows in the rafters.

Late one evening last week, a newborn bull calf still in the calving area of the old bank barn needed to be fed a bottle of fresh, warm milk. I crawled through the gates, roused the baby from his snoozing spot in a pile of soft hay, and began feeding him supper.

Suddenly, a loud cat scream- and it was a scream- split the quiet of the barn at dusk. Tomcat fight, I figured. Until movement several yards away caught my eye.

Something was struggling in the middle of a pile of rather wet manure between two rows of old stalls. Something furry and darkish-colored and very unhappy.

Butch. Stuck in a cat's version of quicksand.

The calf got a bottle break while I climbed over another gate and retrieved one very messy, very smelly, VERY irritated cat. Which, in his haste to flee this predicament, left me with a scratched and bleeding hand.

Once safe, Butch paraded back to where the bottle feeding had resumed, wanting to be petted and comforted. What he got, instead, was a bath in the lukewarm, soapy water left after bottles were cleaned up.

Butch has since forgiven me. When I knelt to pet Solomon this morning, he hopped up on my knee for some equal attention; ten seconds later a hissing-snarling, cat-dog scuffle erupted in my face.

Butch the Cat. Keeping life full of surprises.

Everything You Need To Know To Start A Cut Flower Business

FRIDAY HARBOR, Wash. — With the cut flower business getting bigger every year, many gardeners are curious about how to market homegrown flowers.

A newly-released book written for small or beginning cut-flower market gardeners has 200 pages packed with information. "Flowers For Sale" answers the ques-

tions: How to get into the cut flower business, what to grow that's saleable, where to sell what you grow.

Detailed plans are offered for starting a supermarket bouquet business, which includes selling, pricing, display, equipment, harvest and conditioning techniques, business and tax details,

collecting flowers and greenery from the wild.

The book also includes interviews with flower growers, buyers, and sellers in three different states. These include Saturday Market flowers sellers to international flower brokers, from U-pick flower farms to one grower who makes \$650,000 on less than an acre of flower production.

Included is an extensive listing of the varieties of perennials, annuals, bulbs, tubers, trees, vines, shrubs and herbs that can be used successfully in growing flowers commercially.

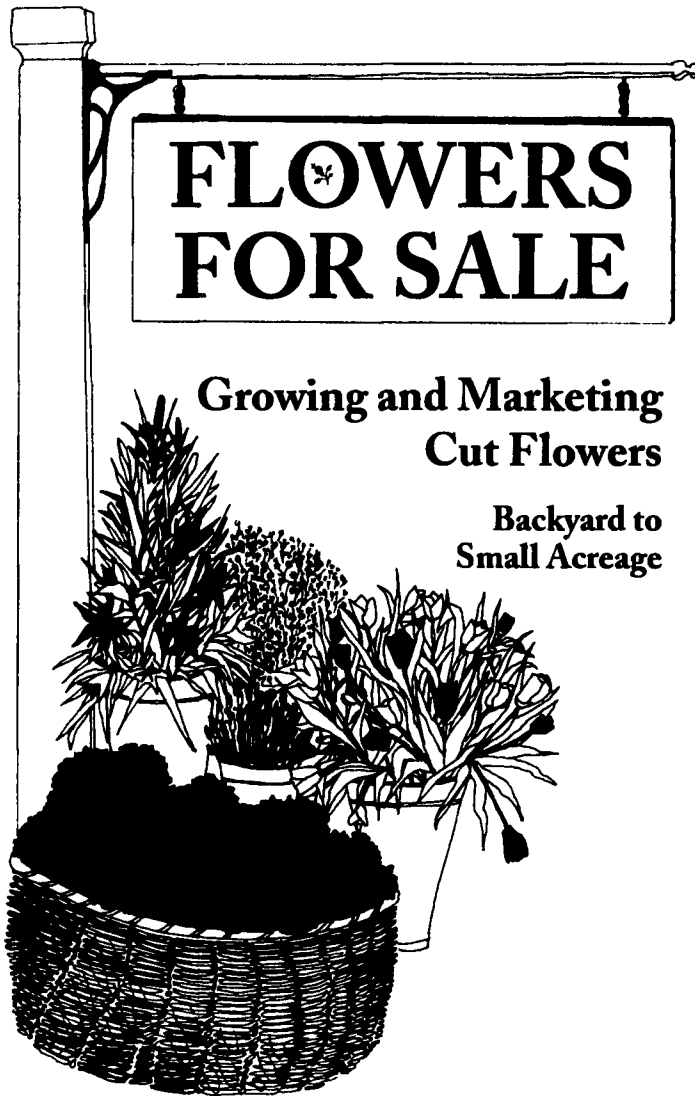
The author Lee Sturdivant writes from first-hand experience. She lives on a 120x180-foot town lot, where she started a cut flower business a few years ago. Sturdivant writes that on a typical June day, she can cut and sell 20 blue delphiniums for \$20, 10 mixed bouquets for \$40, 40 stems Sweet William for \$7, and two wedding bouquets for \$35.

That is more than \$100 worth of flowers a day from a small lot. If trends continue, the cut flower business will get even more profitable. People are willing to pay more for flowers than for fresh fruit and vegetables.

You should learn how to arrange flowers to increase appeal. It is of prime importance to protect cut flowers from premature wilting. All the little details to set up a profitable business and the pitfalls to avoid are given in the 200-page book.

The book is written in an easy-to-read style from a first-person perspective.

To order a copy of "Flowers For Sale," send \$14.95 plus \$1 for postage to San Juan Naturals, PO Box 642 S, Friday Harbor, WA 98250.



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