

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Errant leaves litter the front porch, as if carelessly tossed by some unseen, giant hand.

So, day after day, I tackle them with a broom, sweeping the brownish-green, half-wilted, has-beens of the season out into the yard with numerous others.

But this year's leaf fall is different from most. We've had "fall" since mid-summer. And every one of the noisy, blustery thunderstorms of recent weeks re-litters the porches and lawns with a fresh scattering of maple tree fallout.

Perhaps it was the trauma of July's drought and record setting stretch of high temperatures that has resulted in this premature leaf drop. Or maybe an infestation of aphids, as has been the case in some of the past hot, dry summers. Though I've never completely outgrown a childhood passion for climbing trees, our ancient maples are a bit high to go scaling in search of bugs.

This early onset of falling leaves appropriately ushers in this week's "official" start of my favorite season. But autumn has already worked a foot in the door, its early signs easing into our surroundings more gradually than the jolt of tearing off the first-day-of-autumn page from our day calendar.

Our tall Norway spruce has also been giving us "drops" all season. Pine cones make wonderful wood stove kindling, quick-starting when dry and wonderfully fragrant with authentic pine scent. But the "drops" are not yet kindling-dry, a fact I discovered when trying to start a doggie-roasting fire recently.

So the winter woodstove supply of pine cones, ours and those ga-

thered from the cone-littered lawn of friends, are being "cured." Laid out along the middle "step" of the railroad-tie retainer wall, the cones are protected from blowing away during strong winds while being exposed to the drying effect of the bright sunshine.

Thunderstorms rolling by every other evening, however, tend to slow this drying process. The cones are definitely clean and free of dust, though.

Ears on some of the neighborhood's earliest-planted corn began showing maturity some weeks ago. As husks turn brown and crinkly on some varieties, the ears droop toward the ground, a plant characteristic that helps shed moisture and protect the golden kernels.

A sure sign of the season is the area's army of forage choppers, noisily chewing up row after row of standing corn and spewing it out in tiny pieces of green and yellow into forage wagons lumbering behind. That urgency to start chopping, keep chopping and get finished chopping silage usually overrides all other jobs on dairy and livestock farms during September.

Farm wives nag, worry and pray until the last load is chopped that all that silo-filling-season urgency doesn't override their farmers paying attention to common-sense equipment safety measures.

And now, weedy meadows and brushy fencerows begin to "brighten up" with their seasonal colors, as stands of goldenrod wave long fingers of fluffy yellow blossoms. I break off a handful of the tall blooms growing along a field road, to mix with cattails from the pond bank and loosely



Snitzing will be a featured activity at the Hans Herr House Snitz Fest.

Snitz Fest Reflects Early Settlers' Diets

WILLOW STREET (Lancaster Co.) — Documents in the collection of the Hans Herr House prove the importance of the everyday apple in the diet of early Mennonite settlers in Lancaster County. Christian Herr's 1749 inventory lists among his other possessions an "apple mill and dough (trough) and a cider press." Three generations later, a great-grandson of Christian's (also named Christian) describes planting an orchard. Dated March 9, 1821, he states "...I planted an orchard on the place where John Beam lives as follows...." He then describes by row the apple varieties planted in this orchard, including Rambos, Redstreaks, Winesops, Sweet Pippins, Bellflowers, Newtown Pippins, Romanites, and Hughs Crabs.

arrange in the old nail barrel on the porch. Butternut squash tumbling from an up-turned wicker basket near the barrel adds a harvest touch.

Now if I can just find the gold papertwist ribbon to replace the tired, worn, insect-riddled lavender stuff hanging limply on the front-door wreath, we'll be all set to properly salute the arrival of fall.

I'll have to sweep the leaves off the porch again so fall can find its way in.

The sixth annual Snitz Fest at the Hans Herr House celebrates the history of the apple in Lancaster County. Many of the same varieties mentioned by Christian Herr in 1821 can still be found in the museum's orchard. The anticipated bumper crop of apples this year will give visitors to Snitz Fest a unique opportunity to taste and compare most of the 40 historic varieties at the Tasting Table. Snitz Fest will be held this year on Saturday, October 2 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

There are certainly more ways to consume an apple than right off the tree, as the colonial forefathers well knew. Besides the apple tasting table, visitors to Snitz Fest will also be able to sample apples in a variety of other forms. Apple butter making, cider pressing, and "snitzing" apples for drying will all be ongoing activities throughout the day. Colonial apple recipes will be used in turning out delicacies from the past at both the raised hearth in the 1719 Herr House and at the outdoor beehive bakeoven. After experiencing everything that can be done with an apple, visitors can then board the Conestoga Wagon for a tour of the orchard from which the apples came.

As important as the apple was in the early settler's diet, man cannot, after all, live on apples alone. Snitz Fest will also include

demonstrations of a variety of fall harvest activities. Come see corn husked by hand and shelled with an oxen powered sheller, sauerkraut being made, flax being processed into linen, sorghum being squeezed, soap making and butchering demonstrations. 18th century children's games will keep younger guests to Snitz Fest busy. Tours of the 1719 Herr House, the oldest original building in Lancaster County, will also be an ongoing feature of the day.

A special event at this year's Snitz Fest will be the release of a print of a painting done by local artist and illustrator Wilson V. Chambers. Chambers was for many years prior to his death a resident of the Willow Street area.

Admission to Snitz Fest is \$4 for adults and \$1 for children 7-12. Snitz Fest is a fun-filled educational event sponsored by the Herr House Foundation. The Hans Herr House is located 5 miles south of the city of Lancaster PA, near the village of Willow Street, just south of Routes US 222 and PA 741 and one mile east of PA 272. For more information, call (717) 464-4438.

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