

Without thinking, I pitched the almost-empty jar of peanut butter into the trash. After opening the lid and noting how rancid the remaining contents smelled, it hadn't been hard to decide that these few tablespoons had long passed being tasty — even if it did seem wasteful to toss it out.

Peanut butter is a staple in our household, spread on celery, crackers, raw apple slices, blended in cake and cupcake icing. This container had somehow gotten pushed way into the back corner of the kitchen cupboard, probably months before. While retrieving baking ingredients, I'd found the long-lost jar and promptly chucked it.

Then I had second thoughts. And fished the peanut butter container back out from the bottom of the kitchen trash can.

"The birds will love it," I told The Farmer, warning him that the small amount of peanut butter in the jar was not advised for his consumption. At the same time I had to 'fess up that we had unbelievably otherwise run out of one of his very favorite snack foods. But the birds would at least have some.

"Birdbrain" the youngest has labeled me on more than one occasion. Friends, too polite to say it, probably think the same thing.

For instance, several years ago, we planted a dead tree just a few feet away from one of the kitchen windows. That's right, dug a hole and planted a dead tree, a severalyear-old maple with a trunk about four inches across.

There was a simple, logical reason for such seeming foolishness. We needed a suet feeder site at that particular spot so we could watch the ladderback woodpeckers at closer range. A small dead tree, with a trunk and branches for serving an onion-bag filled with suet chunks, was The Farmer's solution. And it worked perfectly, bringing the hairy, downy and redbellied woodpeckers, nuthatches, even big, bossy bluejays to where you could almost look them right in the eves.

After the recent heavy wind and flooding rainstorm that swept through York County, I noticed the tree was flat on the ground. Since it seems otherwise unscathed and there are still some of last year's suet chunks in the freezer, we will probably replant the dead tree.

Another large, dead limb from one of the big maples lies in another corner of the yard, snuggled between the low-sweeping spruce and a weeping cotoneaster shrub that droops long branches toward the ground. Into this somewhat tangled corner come the cardinals, chirping loudly as they rummage on the ground beneath for sunflower seeds.

While it does tend to make the yard look messy in that area, the brushy corner remains in steady popularity with the cardinals. And when snow covers the ground, as many as a dozen gray and white juncos can often be counted ble of limbs, Scruffy-looking or not, the dead limb will stay yet another winter. Come spring, though, I may ask The Farmer to lop off the bulky

trunk section which sticks out and

invariably snags the lawn mower

scratching around under the tum-

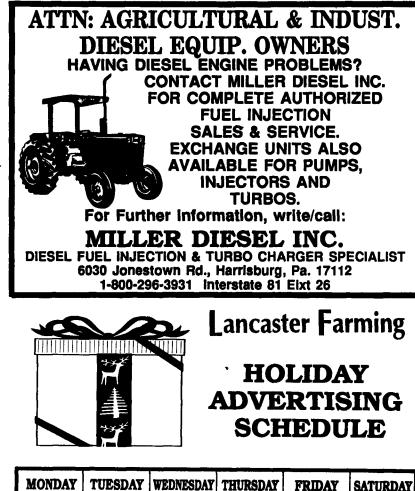
as it passes. Another oft-questioned "bird" item on the farm sits on the most distant pond bank, a 15-foot high pole with a flat, square platform fastened to the top. This was the youngest's design a few years back (the one who calls ME a birdbrain), and is so located to provide a nest-site for the ospreys that make rare appearances at the meadow pond. While we have yet to see an osprey use the high platform, the local blue heron sometimes perches there to scout for fishy snacks. Damp mornings bring an occasional vulture to the high-rise, sitting there with wings slightly outspread, drying in the sunshine. And I recently snapped pictures of the resident redtailed hawk, surveying the pond and meadow from the poletop lookout.

So, given our tendencies toward bird-brained ideas, how could I throw out slightly old peanut butter that will be perfectly good for slathering on pine cones to hang out for the birds to enjoy this winter?

I'm much too "cheep" for that.

A l lers-you've earned --_____ our support.....





| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| DEC. 20 | DEC. 21 | DEC. 22 | DEC. 23 | DEC. 24 | DEC. 25 |
| PUBLIC SALE <u>12 Noon</u> ROP ADV. 5:00 PM | CLASSIFIED FARM EQUIPMENT & ETC. 5:00 PM | | PRINTING AND MAILING DATE | HOME DELIVERY DATE | MERRY CHRISTMAS |
| DEC. 27 | DEC. 28 | DEC. 29 | DEC. 30 | DEC. 31 | JAN. 1 |
| PUBLIC SALE 12 Noon ROP ADV. 5:00 PM | CLASSIFIED FARM EQUIPMENT & ETC. 5:00 PM | | PRINTING AND MAILING DATE | HOME DELIVERY DATE | HAPPY NEW YEAR |
| JAN. 3 | JAN. 4 | JAN. 5 | JAN. 6 | JAN. 7 | JAN. 8 |
| PUBLIC SALE <u>12 Noon</u> ROP ADV. 5:00 PM | CLASSIFIED FARM EQUIPMENT & ETC. 5:00 PM | | PRINTING AND MAILING DATE | HOME DELIVERY DATE | FARM SHOW OPENS |

