

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



We've all heard it. Repeatedly. "I'm SICK of winter!"

And, we've all probably said it. Repeatedly. "I'm ready for SPRING!"

Well, hang in there. We are long past the halfway point in the winter solstice. In fact, we're now two-thirds of the way to that March first-day-of-Spring calendar goalpost. (Uh, we just won't even think about what March did to us last year, OK?)

Anyway, on yet another morning of slipping between the house and the barn, another morning of thawing loose those bucket-shaped ice blocks from the calf pens, another morning of running a hose to heifers whose water fountain line might thaw out by about May 15, another day with a cancelled meeting — I decided that I had had it. Enough.

After spreading another round of sunflower seed and corn for the

birds and our burgeoning backyard squirrel population — latest count is ten — I made decisive, anti-winter, counter-attack against February.

I marched into the basement storage area and made a beeline for the plastic container in which the garden seeds are stored. The time had come to take inventory and finalize the seed catalog orders. Those catalogs have been kicking around here now for close to two months. But until I knew what was already in hand, page flipping was merely catalog window shopping and now serious write-out-a-check business.

Inventory proved interesting, by gosh. There are seeds there I forgot I'd ever bought. Like the packet of Big Girl tomatoes, with the glow-orange, ten-cent price tag. Obviously acquired at some, close-out, end-of-season sale. Wonder whose?

Two packets of red beet seeds? We ate a few of the red beets planted last year in the garden, before they more or less got forgotten behind all the other fresh things we like even better. Come to think of it, there are still a couple of giant, oversized beets still back in the garden. Well frozen, no doubt. Hey, Mom, need a packet of red beet seed?

Why do I have this brown bag with multiple ounces of radish seed? A little radish seed goes a long way. I pondered that mystery for a couple of hours before the "light bulb" came on in my memory.

The bag of seed was purchased ages ago. I wrote "radish" on it a season or two ago, when I looked in at the tiny, round black seed. But now I remember planting a patch of radishes in the fall of 1992 — and having a wonderful crop of turnips grow there.

Cross turnip seed off the "to order" list. And cross "radish" off the bag.

Into the trash went another small bag containing cucumber seed. Old cucumber seed. The place of its purchase has been out of business for probably five years — and there are two packs of cucumber seed of much newer origin on hand.

Right behind it went another old packet of dill seed. Also purchased at the site long-since out of business. Thinking back, that probably explains why the dill I planted last summer never came up. Gardening is too labor-intensive and harvest precious to

Children Study Conservation Tips

NEWARK, Del. — "Turn off the water while you brush your teeth. Turn it on when you are ready to rinse."

"Use a bucket to wash the car. Use the hose only for rinsing."

Hundreds of Delaware school children are learning these and other important water conservation tips, thanks to a University of Delaware Cooperative Extension booklet "Our Water Supply and You."

Under the direction of Extension water quality specialist Tom Williams, Debbie Short, an agriculture-education major, wrote the eight-page booklet.

Geared to students in kindergarten through third grade, the booklet has been used in New Castle

County by the 4-H "Ag in the Classroom" program. And in Sussex County, youngsters received the booklet this fall while touring the woodland classroom at the Research and Education Center in Georgetown, reports Extension renewable resources agent Dean Belt. More than 1,200 copies have been distributed since March, when the booklet was printed.

Williams has long seen the need for a booklet of this kind, designed specifically for young children and their families. Short was an able part-time worker, eager to tackle the task of researching, compiling and writing during the fall '92 semester. She also compiled three booklets that cover drinking water, waste disposal and water conservation for the 4-H program. These booklets are used by 4-H leaders for children ages 9 and up.

"We all need to learn to conserve our water supply, and kids can do their part to help," says Short. "Simple things — like kids turning off the water while they brush their teeth — can make a big difference."

Williams notes that the booklet is very "kid-friendly." It even includes a page of water word games. He also says that the booklet can be used as a stand-alone resource in the classroom or in conjunction with other projects and materials.

Interested parents, teachers or youth group leaders can receive copies of "Our Water Supply and You" by calling Williams at (302) 831-2468.

me to waste time with questionable seed — especially when seed is a relatively inexpensive part of the whole effort.

Seed inventory complete, I grabbed the pruning shears and slid (literally) across the backyard to the pussywillow. Tips of the furry, white catkins are already pushing through their tight, protective bud covering. In a vase in the warmth of the kitchen, they'll swell out to full, fluffy bloom in a week or two. A branch of forsythia is already in full, yellow bloom on one windowsill.

And in a thumb-your-nose gesture at winter, I'll begin sterilizing soil and taking plant cuttings.

If I can get enough ice chipped away from the greenhouse door to get inside.



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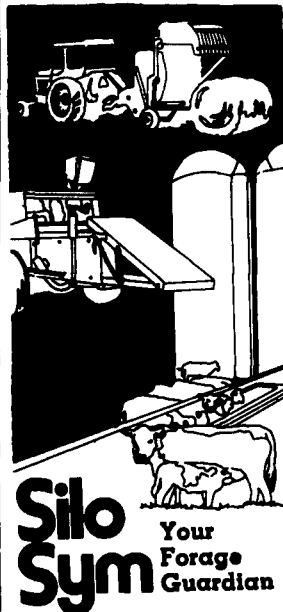
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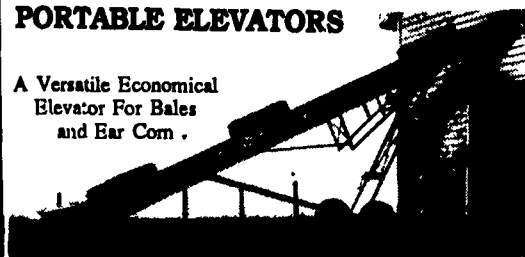
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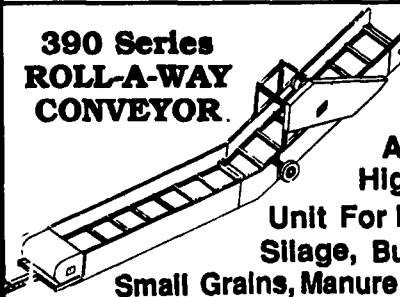
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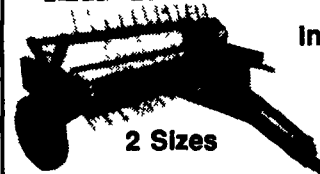
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