

Ida's Notebook

Ida Risser

Ordinarily I would have my garden planted by the end of March. But, today as I write this the ground is still covered with snow and ice. Actually we've been so busy with various meetings that it is hard to imagine finding time to plant a garden.

Last week we attended a meeting on irrigation of farmland and heard the rules and regulations that apply to farmers. There was emphasis on the amount of water that flows into the Susquehanna River and the amount that is removed. I had not realized that the city of Baltimore has a pipeline from Conowingo Dam to their city. The potential capacity of the

line is 500 million gallons per day. Everyone's need for water seems to grow and grow. Now instead of a bath once a week some folks take a shower twice a day.

We attended a travelogue on Italy in a local high school. It is so much easier to do arm chair travel than to do the planning for a plane, train or ship vacation. Although, I find that the memories do not last as long if you do not personally experience the countries' landscape and people.

Last month our square dance group had a large attendance. Instead of two or three squares we had more than 50 people. Maybe they were glad to be able to get

Workshop

RUTGERS, N.J. — Does the idea of spring give you thoughts of flowers and pretty things? Join Charity Rinker, president of the home economics advisory council, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, in making some interesting crafts to enhance your home for springtime. The date is Tuesday, March 8, 2 - 4 p.m. at the Hunterdon County Extension Office, 4 Gauntt Place, Route 31, Flemington, New Jersey. The fee is \$6. To register for Spring Crafts call Rutgers Cooperative Extension (908) 788-1342.

away from home between snow storms. It is one affair that you can attend when you are tired from a day's work and after expending a lot of energy come home less tired as the music is so lively.

Over the weekend our daughter and her young son from New Jersey visited us. The grandchildren look forward to visiting our dairy farm when they come to Lancaster County. Sometimes they are lucky and not only find cows, calves, and cats but also pigs, a lamb, and geese. The farm is so very different from their home surroundings.

Farmers Needed To Grow Flax

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then bundled by machine and samples are mailed to France for inspection.

Farms producing quality flax will be asked to grow a minimum of 25 acres of flax in 1995 with a promise that it will be purchased by Flax America.

Although Zinzendorf did not disclose a price, he said it is comparable to other grain prices. He promises that the contract drawn up between the company and farmers will include a specified price so that no speculation is involved.

"The market for linen is growing at a fast rate, which is why the company is searching for more land to grow it," he said.

After the flax is harvested, farmers can plant any winter grain or grass they prefer for double cropping.

Flax is grown in many countries since it does well in both warm and cool climates. It does need rainfall, and is suitable to Pennsylvania's rainfall so that irrigation is not

needed. A low pasture or meadow offers better growing conditions than high fields where drain off is a problem.

Zinzendorf said that he was asked to be an advisor to Flax America because he is part of the Christiansbrunn Brotherhood, a religious cloister that currently is the largest producer of flax in the state.

But the method the Brotherhood uses to grow and harvest flax is entirely different than that promoted by Flax America. The cloister uses no electricity or motor-driven machinery where they live in the Mahantongo Valley of central Pennsylvania. As a self-sufficient community, the Brothers are expected to produce crafts for the cloister's use and to sell. The Brotherhood was founded in 1749, but disbanded before 1800. It was reorganized in 1987.

The Brotherhood demonstrates the pre-mechanized process of turning flax into linen at historic sites and events. An annual open house is held at the cloister located 1 1/2 miles outside Pitman, two miles east of State Road 125. This year, the open house is scheduled for August 13, 1-5 p.m.

Farmers interested in raising flax are asked to write to Johannes Zinzendorf at Christiansbrunn Kloster, R.D.1, Box 149, Pitman, PA 17964.

Efficient Farms Are Productive Farms

U.S. farmers use about \$2 billion worth of electricity each year for lighting, crop drying, ventilation, irrigation and countless other activities. As energy costs rise and farmers' profit margins shrink, implementing a strategy for efficient use of electricity becomes paramount.

The cost of electricity used in farm production depends on the amount used and when it is used. Farmers can cut energy costs by reduction how much electricity they use as well as by prudently scheduling when they use it.

When large motors are used only during off-peak periods, power suppliers can offer more favorable rates because generation and transmission facilities are being used more efficiently. If, however, large loads are used during peak periods, suppliers assess a special demand charge for the extra generation capacity required.

Farmers can reduce the amount of electricity they use without reducing productivity simply by following a few painless practices.

Here are some suggestions on how to increase electric efficiency on the farm:

- Set water heater thermostats as low as permissible while meeting sanitation requirements, to reduce tank and pipe heat losses.
- Turn water heaters off during long periods when hot water is not needed.
- Add insulation to water heaters and pipes that carry hot water.
- Use curtains or partitions to confine animals to small areas during periods of high heat requirements, such as brooding.
- Establish routines for switching off all lights when they are not needed.
- Light only work areas rather than entire rooms.
- When replacing incandescent lamps, use more efficient, long-life fluorescent units.
- Locate motors in the coolest, cleanest, driest environment possible.
- Maintain proper belt tension and pulley alignment on motor-driven equipment.
- Add rodent guards to open motors and keep equipment clean.

Many more suggestions are available in publications produced by the National Food and Energy Council Low Cost/No Cost Energy Management Practices on Farms is a pamphlet offering energy-saving tips that cost little or nothing to implement. The Farm Energy Analysis is a collection of more than 300 pages of energy-management techniques and evaluation procedures.

To obtain copies, contact the NFEC at 314 875 7155 or write 409 Vandiver Drive, Suite 4-202, Columbia, MO 65202. The cost is \$1 for the Low Cost/No Cost brochure and \$27 for the Farm Energy Analysis.

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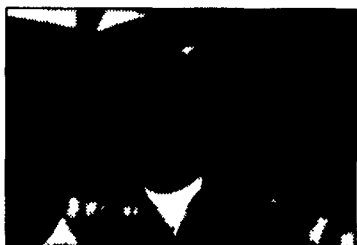
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Forrest Wessner Jr. farms about 300 acres of potatoes, oats, wheat, soybeans, and hay near Germansville, Pennsylvania.

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