

**On being
a farm wife
- And other
hazards**

Joyce Bupp



the heavy garden shovel that's still kicking around in there.

Every time I load groceries in the truck, or haul recycling materials to the township building, I mentally remind myself to remove this residue of winter. Normally, I haul a container of bulk rock salt around with me through the cold months along with a shovel, equipment stashed against the possibility of having to shovel out of a snowbank somewhere.

When salt became worth its weight in gold along about February, regular table salt was the only kind available one particular day I shopped. Thankfully, it was never needed. Still there, it's a precautionary step in case of a June blizzard. And serves as a reminder not to complain about hot, humid,

sweat-inducing weather.

Another lingering remembrance is the pile of gravel swept from the garage floor and the blacktop surrounding it. After sweeping up the collection of tiny stones and dust late one recent evening and not having figured out where to most usefully deposit it other than outside the door, I've since stumbled through it a couple of times.

Maybe the township road crew would like it back for reuse again next year.

Our partially-collapsed barn roof has since been winched back into place and only needs some minor, finish-up repairs. One small section of ceiling in the calf nursery still droops a bit from

where snowmelt came through, another lingering remembrance.

When the water pipes in the old bank barn froze up, The Farmer substituted large tubs and hoses. Short a tub for a pen of young steers, he devised one by chain-sawing off a section of a large, plastic barrel. After the fountains thawed, the white plastic tub was abandoned outside the pen.

After coveting that tub for several weeks, I finally scrubbed the cattle "residue" from it, filled it with soil and planted it with red impatiens. A matching one for the other side of the front porch would be nice, but there must be some easier way to get one than repeating last winter.

A glance over the countryside now belies the barren, bitter coldness that enveloped it just weeks ago. Mother Nature has recovered nicely from her seasonal extremes, though she's been a mite stingy lately with her moisture.

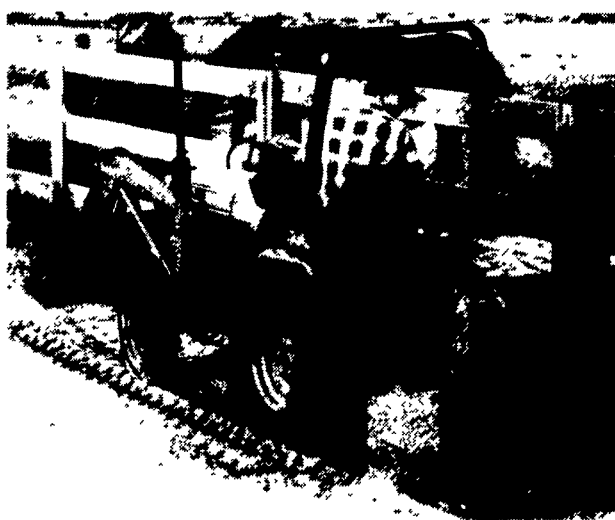
Barley is nearly ripe, alfalfa greening back up for second-cutting hay and corn stretching out to shade the bare ground beneath. Trees and bushes are re-leaving branches burnt bare by icy, drying winds and deep-freeze chills. An old hedge growing near the back porch looks scruffy on top, but is pushing more green sprouts from the ground than usual.

And the roses I feared were history instead look healthier than they have for a couple of years, sending up thick new canes from rootstocks insulated by the deep snow.

Fading into the fuzziness of memory, winter will long be remembered for its fury, its intensity, its seemingly-endless duration. Building repairs, regrowing shrubbery, lingering accumulations of gravel and salt-killed lawns — and orchard friends with precious little harvest to look forward to — linger on.

Winter. Wiped out by the lush loveliness of June.

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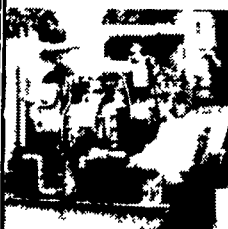
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