

Have your corn planted yet? We do. Well, at least a little bit of it. It's not planted in very orderly rows. Planting depth is probably not ideal for optimum emergence. And the location site is awfully grassy.

In fact, the corn's planted in grass. Back yard grass. All over the backyard grass. Under piles of leaves. Scattered around various spots in the flower beds. Probably some under the woodpile, too.

Credit for these purposeful, but random, acts of corn planting goes to Squanto.

Remember Squanto of the history books? He was the native American credited with teaching the Pilgrims how to plant corn, thus enabling them to survive through the harsh, sparse, New England winters. Our Squanto is a native, but of the four-legged variety. It's a squirrel with a penchant for corn tillage. And we suspect it's a "she," rather than a "he," probable mother of the five baby squirrels that rampaged through the maple trees last summer.

For years, no squirrel dared venture near the yard, due to our vigilant cat patrol. During last winter's enduring cold and deep snow cover, a pack of the local, hungry bushy-tails figured the sunflower-filled birdfeeders and

ears of corn were easier pickings than prying acorns from under packed snow and ice. And the cats were finding the barn to be far warmer than squirrel chasing in two-foot-deep drifts.

One female took a liking to the place and never left, raising her family in the maple farthest from the house. Several of the babies also remain. On occasion, we'll have up to four fat, furry, gray bodies playing tag around the trees, investigating the patio furniture, rooting in the flower beds and hanging upside-down on a tree trunk deftly nibbling the centers out of kernels of corn from a cob impaled on a spike there.

So, in preparation for a repeat of last winter's critter visits, I picked up a couple of bags of corn in nearby fields where the forage harvester had run down stalks while maneuvering for turns. As fast as we spike a cob on the tree, the squirrels clean it off.

But, I haven't been so quick to replace those bare cobs with full ones since corn planting got underway. One morning last week, I watched from the kitchen window as Squanto stuffed two kernels of corn into her cheeks, scampered down the tree, dug a hole under the washline, planted one kernel, neatly covered it with ground, moved a

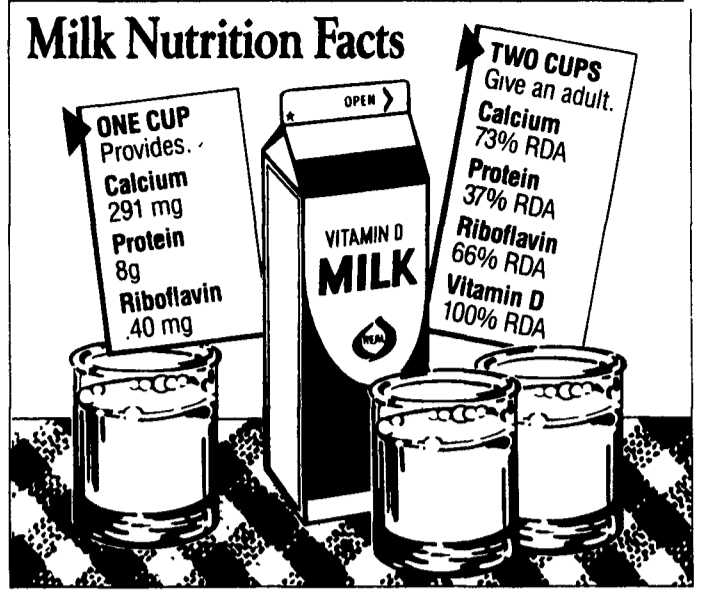
few yards away and repeated the procedure. She continued that process for the five minutes or so I observed this performance. Squanto and her kids are also efficient homebuilders.

Almost daily, you can spy at least one of them working its way across the yard, stuffing dry leaf after dry leaf into its mouth, until leaves protrude in all directions and it would seem impossible to stuff another one in. Then, the leaf gatherer will sprint up a tree trunk and disappear, returning shortly after for another mouthful.

Now, three of the big maples each has a large, round nest high in the branches, thickly packed clumps of maple leaves held together apparently with sure-stick Squirrely-Nest Super Glue. Or maybe woven together with baling string. How a "dumb animal" can make a collection of dried up leaves stay together 60 feet up in a tree with the winds that blow down over the hills is an awesome mystery of Mother Nature.

A half-hour after first spying Squanto the Squirrel Cornplanter, I glanced back out the window. She was still digging holes and planting kernels of corn, two at each trip. And the corn cob was nearly bare.

We really enjoy feeding and watching the squirrels and the birds that share this place. But I'm not really looking forward to mowing a cornfield all next summer.



Goat-Hair Fibers

(Continued from Page B5)

Her first two Spanish-bred goats were a Christmas present to Binnie Roig. With Angora rabbits and longhaired sheep already on the Dalmatia R1 farm owned by her and her husband, Keith, the goats were a natural addition to round out the variety of natural fibers she intended to blend for crafting use.

Binnie Roig now scours and dyes the fibers from her goats and sends it away to have it commercially carded and blended. She then sells the various blends of wool, mohair, cashmere and angora fibers to spinners.

Leslie does some niche marketing of the curly, lustrous mohair from her flock as beards for hand-

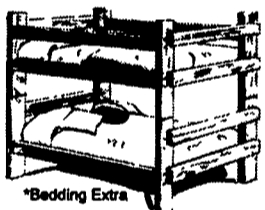
crafted Santas and as natural-looking hair for dolls. Mohair also readily takes to dyeing, turning rich, deep colors that blend well and enhance the shades of other natural fibers.

One customer she remembers was specifically looking for fibers produced in York County because she wanted to give holiday presents that originated from her home locale

"There's a lot more interest in natural fibers in recent years," said Leslie. "Lots more women seem to want to learn to spin."

"You can't justify it, cost wise," she said. "But, there's the satisfaction of making something yourself, of knowing where it originated."

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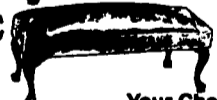
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