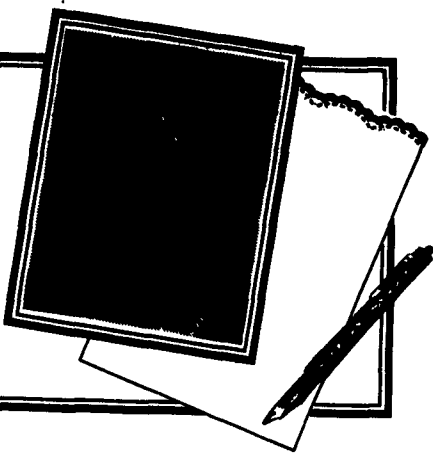


**Ida's
Notebook**
by
Ida Risser



Election Day has come and gone but the memory of a small turnout lingers in my mind. People seem to feel that this election is not important even though it is the time when they pick the people to be voted on in the fall. It seems that a Presidential election really gets people interested in politics.

The district that I work in only had about one-fourth of the registered voters voting. It is a 14-hour job but one that allows me to see neighbors that otherwise I would not see. In November most of the same people will again make the trip to the polls to show their preference for nominees.

Last week my husband and I took the boat to our camp site and this time we left it at Walker Lake. We picked rainy days to go there and we had to wear raingear as we fished during the showers. We caught 20 fish in two days of fish-

ing but most of them were pan fish. However, we did get some nice perch and a trout.

One night while we were eating the fish that I prepared in our camper for supper, the lights went out. We had no electric and the battery failed, too. Boy, was it dark to pick bones out of fish. But, the electric did come back on and we finished our meal and could read magazines until bedtime.

In the morning, we awakened to sunshine and lots of tiny birds in the treetops. When I took a walk in the woods, I discovered a Roseshell azalea growing on a large native shrub. The flowers were a delicate pink as they bloom in late May.

Now that I'm home again, I must spend more time in the garden. The peas have been blooming for weeks and will soon be ready to pick.

**Grow Cut Flowers
As Alternative Crop**

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Cut flowers can be a high-value alternative crop — if you can carve out a marketing niche, says a Penn State horticulture expert.

"Cut flowers, including both field- and greenhouse-grown varieties, can bring in a higher return per acre than many agronomic crops," says Dr. Robert Berghage, assistant professor of horticulture in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"Growing flowers is, however, very labor-intensive and can require more of an investment — especially if it means building a greenhouse," he adds. "Chances are you won't get rich raising cut flowers, but many growers make a reasonably comfortable living growing them full time."

Cut flowers grown in Pennsylvania include both greenhouse- and field-grown annual and perennial crops, such as daffodils, lilies, snapdragons and sunflowers. Some growers specialize in plants that can be used in dried arrangements, such as straw flowers and statice.

Many farmers have begun raising cut flowers or other ornaments as an additional income source. "It can be an excellent business for

a farm spouse or other family members," says Berghage. "This is done all over the state and is especially common in the Southeast, where there are a lot of full- and part-time flower growers.

"You can grow any flower that is used in florists' arrangements," Berghage says. "But it pays to grow specialty crops, such as German statice, rather than widely grown items such as carnations, chrysanthemums or roses."

Carnations, chrysanthemums and roses used to be grown extensively in Pennsylvania, but now mostly are grown in Colombia and other Latin American countries and shipped to the United States. "Even though these flowers are shipped long distances, they often are sold at lower prices than those grown locally," said Berghage.

Although some Pennsylvania growers still successfully market roses and carnations, most growers are better off growing other flowers.

Growing cut flowers doesn't necessarily require a lot of land, unless you're planning to go into business in a big way. "Many people grow flowers in their backyards and sell them locally," Berghage says. "Visit any farmers' market and you'll probably see at

least one person selling cut flowers."

Others sell their merchandise through cooperatives or have their own wholesale or retail businesses. "Small growers are better off growing a variety of flowers and selling locally or working through a cooperative," Berghage says.

"If you want to compete with larger businesses, it's important to keep up with the trends," he says. "Many flowers go in and out of style. For instance, there has been a sunflower fad for the past few years, but that's becoming passe. Shrewd growers are already anticipating what will be popular next."

"Read everything you can find about the business," Berghage says. "Get to know your local florists, and find out what flowers they are interested in buying. Visit farmers' markets in your area and see what others are growing and size up your competition."

If you're thinking of growing and marketing cut flowers, several associations and periodicals can help. The horticulture expert at your county's Penn State Cooperative Extension office is an excellent source of information on floriculture groups and publications.

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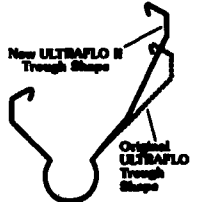
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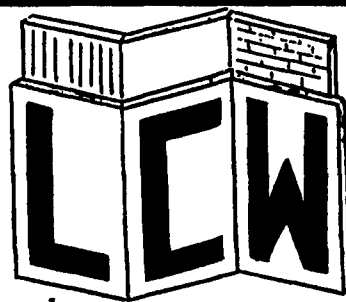
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