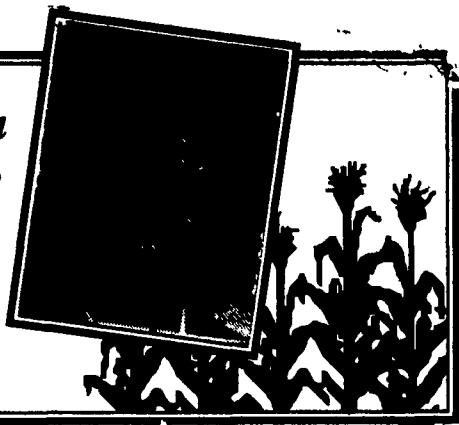


**On Being a
Farm Wife
(and other
hazards)**
Joyce Bupp



They stand poised, like debutantes, to be introduced on stage to an eager, waiting audience.

Graceful and lithe of limb, they show the promise that will come with maturity.

For months, the trees have stood before us striped to their skeletons, their inner, intricate structures of trunk and limbs exposed in bare silhouette against the sky. But, even in their leafless state, trees add interest to the landscapes to wildlife.

During their months of inner exposure, our farmstead trees yield up an inventory of the nests they have concealed and sheltered, homes for another generation of hungry baby birds. The nests range from the larger ones to robins, perhaps tucked in the crook of a heavier branch high up in the maples, to a dainty, palm-sized one carefully tucked into the middle of the pussywillow.

And we can always depend on seeing, near the tip of at least one of the old maples, a large, somewhat messy-looking clump of dried leaves into which a squirrel will have been snuggling. While the squirrel's nests generally look a bit scruffy, their success in keeping a pile of dried leaves together at all, with the wind we have at 40 feet above the ground, puts me in awe of a squirrel's engineering skills.

Of special satisfaction to us was discovering after last fall's leaf drop — for the second consecutive year — a nest of Northern (Baltimore) Oriole. Each of the tightly-woven, teardrop-shaped nests has been fastened by the oriole parents way, way out at the very end of a slender limb on the lower edge of the tree. Perhaps the breeze can best rock their hatchlings to sleep that way.

And while we heard these birds revealed where their nests were suspended — just 10 feet above our heads as we mowed the backyard. The orioles have a standing invitation to go over our heads in such a manner at any time.

But now, May ushers in the

return of the trees, back for their annual summer reruns in full-blown leaf. Already they have begun softening the dark, starkness of the winter woods with delicate, pale color. And the spring wildflowers, which bloom on the woodlot floor beneath, make haste to bloom and set seed pods before the thickening canopy overhead completely shades out their sunlight.

Our weeping willow at the pond is one of the first, pushing hints of slender foliage out the sides of the tender, cascading branches for which it is named. The devastating ice storm of last spring badly shredded some large portions of this nearly 23-year-old tree. That's about the life span for willows anyway, in our experience. But the return of foliage greatly softens the effect of the loss of several of the willow's large limbs, leaving it less awkward looking. It's the favorite tree of the geese — they like to "park" on the grass beneath it on sunny summer mornings. The greenery are the maples, first sending out fluffy green "flowers," followed by reddish-tinted young leaves. Their extremely thick growth around the house provides our home's no-cost version of summer air-conditioning

— but prevents anything else from growing these, except for crab-grass and exceptionally tough weeds.

Other hardwoods in the meadow fencerows and the woodlot open foliage at varying times, with the subtle color of the combined blend changing almost daily. Locusts and hickory and wild cherry and oak, dogwoods, swampmaple, and sassafras, and sycamore each contribute their own shading to the combined "green" color of the woods. In the space of about the first week of May, each will lose its identity within the woods as a riot of leaves erupts, and from the distance to the back porch, can be seen as one massive canopy. Our

neighbors in the adjoining wooded housing development will nearly disappear from view and the barely-seen traffic on the interstate will visibly vanish behind the lush leaf growth.

This modern, fast-paced, technological society of ours has become masterful at tearing down trees and replacing them with the paved-over, roofed-over, built-over whatever. Unfortunately, we haven't yet figured out how to instantly replace the benefits each fallen tree contributed to our quality of life. But it does help if we each just plant one now and then.

So invest in your future oxygen supply.

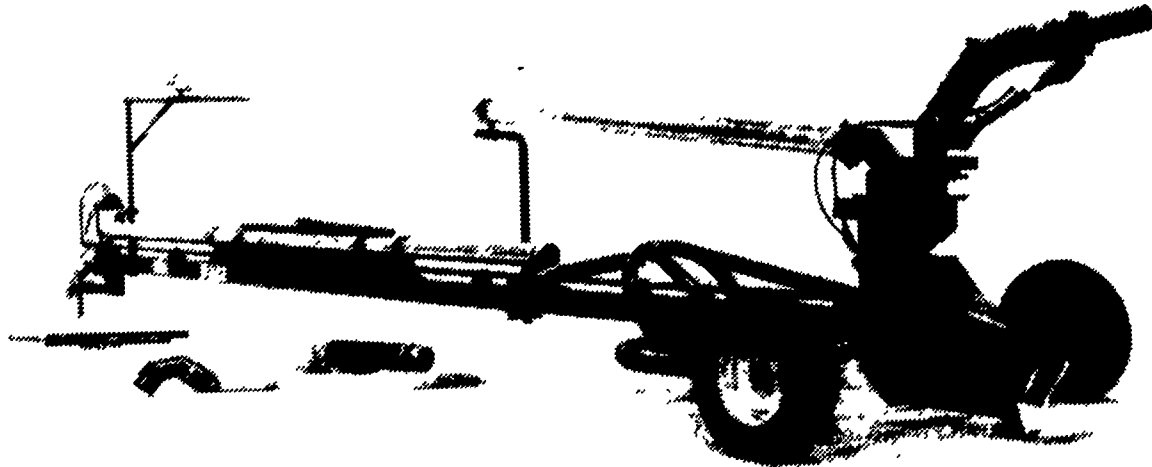
Plant a tree.

Dairy Maids, Princesses Wanted In Franklin County

CHAMBERSBURG (Franklin County) — Making preparations to crown a new Franklin County Dairy Princess. The 30th pageant will be held at the Lighthouse Restaurant on June 13 at 7 p.m.

The purpose of the program is to promote milk and other dairy products.

Contestants are needed for the dairy ambassador program. Entry blanks are available from Franklin County Dairy Promotion Committee co-chairman Julia Meyers at (717) 369-2209 or (717) 369-2155. Completed entry blanks and photos must be submitted by May 16.



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