

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



We all get unexpected surprises.

Sometimes, they're less than welcome.

Like walking out your back door and slipping on ice. Finding a flat tire on your car. Or having your accountant inform you that you owe more income tax than you estimated.

Much more welcome are the pleasant surprises.

An unexpected phone call from a long-lost friend. A letter saying you've won something (actually won something, not one of those junk-mail come-ons). The magnificent rainbow like a friend recently spied in the midst of a snowsquall. Or, having your accountant call you back to tell you he made a mistake in figuring your tax and

that you will actually get a refund.

Even tiny surprises are day-brighteners. Like the one I found upon peeking in the greenhouse one morning last week.

There, at the top of a long stem above a cluster of foliage, was a giant, calla lily flower. Ivory-white, with a waxy texture, the magnificent bloom was absolutely stunning and totally unexpected to pop out here in the middle of winter's chilly, gray weather.

This yard-high plant with its lush, arrowhead-shaped foliage began life as a small shoot snatched from a friend. Well, not actually snatched. Her calla plant had wintered here last year. Before returning it, I

reputed the plant and removed one of the young shoots it had grown in the interim.

The baby lily thrived in manure-rich potting soil, pushing up ever-larger leaves as its roots poked outward and downward. From a four-inch pot, the calla moved to an eight-incher, and then into a large, nursery-stock container. It was all set to summer out on the porch, and maybe, if the plant felt happy there, even bloom.

I couldn't have imagined a more delightful promise of spring.

But companion plants blossoming nearby have also responded to the lengthening daylight and stronger sunshine. Geraniums are sporting flower clusters of bright red, glo-pink, and deep fuschia shades. Scruffy-looking impatiens are pushing out new buds, a petunia tentatively opens a purple blossom and the lobelia plants moved inside to winter cover themselves with deep, heavenly-blue flowers. And the first pot of paperwhite daffodils are filling the kitchen with heavenly fragrance.

Outside, the response is also evident, if a bit more subtle. Our first crocus, at a sheltered corner of the house, spread yel-

low and purple blooms when the sun shines, then curl back up into fetal buds at sunset. Topmost limbs of our aged pussy willow, a good 20 feet above the lawn, are covered with furry, white catkins. And the more sheltered forsythia bushes are on the verge of popping their buds.

Meanwhile, our orchardist neighbors chew their nails, anxiously watch thermometers and

long for colder weather. Buds pushing so early have little protection against early-spring cold snaps.

So, thank you, Mother Nature, for a late-winter surprise like a calla bloom. And, we fresh peach lovers would be ever-so-grateful if you'd turn the bloomin' temperatures outside down for just a little while longer.

Fall Floriculture Plants For Profit

LEBENSBURG (Cambria Co.) - Penn State Cooperative Extension has announced a new program designed to assist growers interested in producing fall-potted plants.

Fall Floriculture Plants for Profit will be held Tuesday, March 31, at the Arena Restaurant in Bedford from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This program will provide growers with the tools to successfully grow profitable, fall-blooming potted plants.

Whether you've grown these crops in the past or are just getting started, this program will give you information you need to grow the best fall plants around.

While early spring may seem to be a little early to start thinking about fall plants, mums cuttings are set in June and need to be ordered very soon.

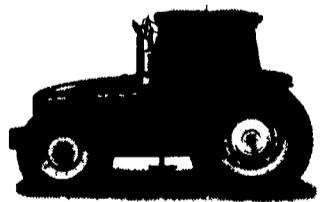
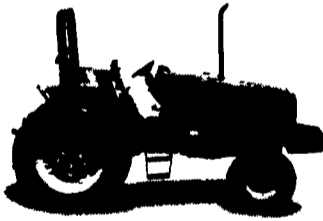
Preregistration is required because class size is limited and program materials need to be ordered. The cost of the program is \$20 per person and includes all program materials, lunch, and morning beverages.

For information and registration, call Steve Bogash at (814)693-3265. Registration brochures will also be available at Bedford, Cambria, and Somerset cooperative extension offices.

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