

On Being a Farm Wife (and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



"I could do that."

Did you ever think that to yourself as you stood amidst the horticulture displays at your local fair and pondered the impressive results of some green thumber's careful cultivation and coddling of pumpkins?

Well, I have. And I bet some of you have, too.

After all, at our local York Fair, giant pumpkins that win the top prize command premiums of one buck per pound. And on a several hundred pound Jack-O-Lantern candidate, finding the trick to growing a blue ribbon winner could prove to be a real treat to your gardening fund.

Thus, a few years ago, and armed with some advice from some local champion pumpkin growers, I ordered up my seed packet of Dill's Atlantic Giants. We have a no-man's-land space between two barns, blessed with protection from frost, several hours of sun and rich, organic, once-manure soil that grabs and hold moisture.

What better place to cultivate a prize-winner?

And so it came to be that the thick, ankle-tangling foliage that fall began to show orange orbs in late summer, some of them pretty impressive in size. But, not a York Fair winner, for sure. Of that I was certain. So the pumpkin remained to finish ripening - since they had gotten

a late start- beyond the pumpkin show season. And, in due time, I arrived home late one night from a two-day meeting to stumble onto a front porch piled full of pumpkins. The Farmer had enlisted the help of a cousin's youngsters for the harvest.

Some were given away, one or two became baking ingredients and the great, orange giant remained on the porch as a seasonal ornament. Then one night late in the year it turned very much colder than expected; by morning, we were well on our way to having a giant, orange puddle of pumpkin mush oozing across the front porch.

A good quantity of the large, flat seeds were salvaged and stored in the refrigerator. Some were shared with interested friends.

Last spring about this time, only one of the several pea-pots filled with sterilized soil and planted with the giant pumpkin seeds had germinated. I carefully coddled it, figuring I would put more seeds into the ground when it was planted, hopefully to grow other vines and ultimately have some for cross germination. One evening in May, I carefully planted the single pot of giant pumpkin potential, along with more of the saved seeds, as well as started plants and seeds of some smaller types.

That night, the heifers in the

pen next to the barn escaped and ran rampant through the pumpkin planting. I don't think they did that another night last summer.

OK, OK. I surrendered. If there were to be no pumpkins between the barns last season, we would just have to live with it. Then our El Nino drought set in- and hardly anyone had local pumpkins last season. Nevertheless, there were still a couple hundred-pounders painstakingly cultivated around the area, carefully and faithfully watered all summer. But not nearly as many as in previous years, based on the fair's giant pumpkin competition.

Now, it's time again. Actually, it's probably past time and the veterans no doubt have their plants started and growing happily under lights. So I'm behind before I begin.

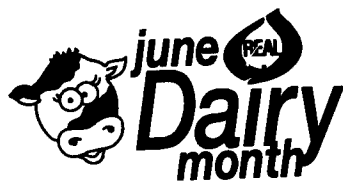
Nevertheless, seeds are started in sterile-soil-filled pea pots, black plastic will go down for warmth and weed control and this die-hard will try once more.

Prize winning is not the end goal.

The end goal is to watch them grow - and the light they spark in the eyes of a youngster carting off the fruits of the pumpkin vine. But you have to start by planting them. Now.

It's time, folks, to think fall....harvest....pumpkins. Even if you don't get a prizewinner, it'll be fun to watch them grow.

And you might make some little kids very happy with your efforts.



Museum Opens On Mother's Day

MUMFORD, N.Y. - On Mother's Day Weekend, Genesee Country Village & Museum, the third-largest collection of historic buildings in the country opens for its 23rd season.

All moms receive free admission to the museum on Mother's Day, May 10.

A special Mother's Day Brunch will be served from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Reservations are required. Call (716) 538-6822.

Expert museum gardeners will lead guided tours through the more than a dozen heirloom gardens located in the Historic Village.

The "Wildflowers of Spring" celebration features special activities at Genesee Country Nature Center including a guided woodland walk, garden tour, instruction in planting and propagating native wildflowers and a variety of children's activities. Visitors may also purchase some native plants at a wildflower sale.

Genesee Country Village & Museum consists of 57 19th-cen-

tury buildings that have been moved to the site, restored to original condition and furnished with period antiques. Costumed "villagers" and craftspeople interpret Genesee River Valley Life for visitors. The museum also includes the Gallery of Sporting Art with one of the largest collections of wildlife art in the country and the 175-acre Genesee Country Nature Center with plant, animal and geology exhibits and five miles of hiking trails through woodlands, wetlands and meadows.

The museum is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday through Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekends and holidays. Parking is free. Admission is adults \$11, seniors and students with ID \$9.50, youth 4 to 16 \$6.50; children 3 and under free. The museum is located in Mumford, N.Y., 20 miles southwest of Rochester and 45 miles east of Buffalo near New York State Thruway exits 47 (LeRoy) and 46 (Rochester).

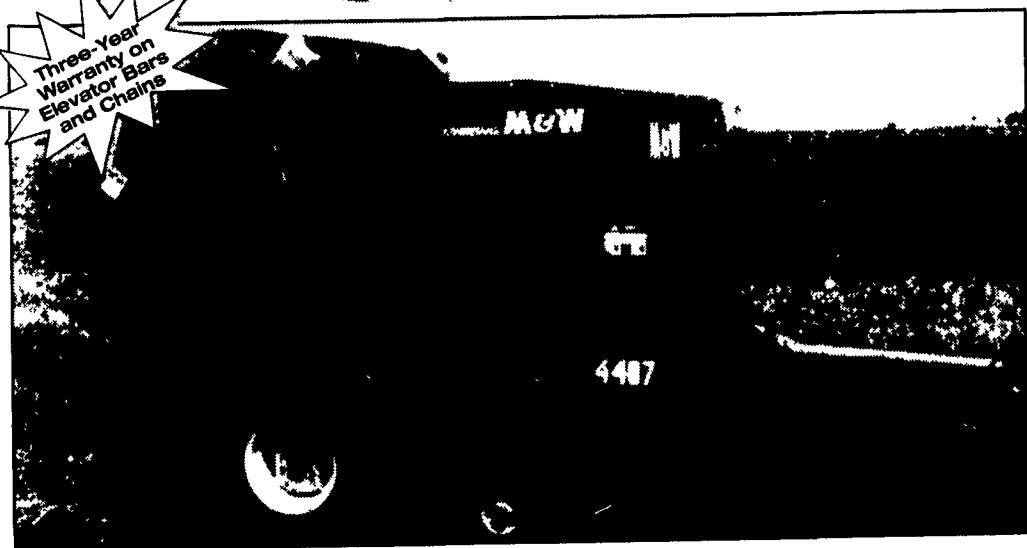
Call the museum at (716) 538-6822 for further information.

Herb Horticulture Program

WESTMINSTER, Md. - Learn to build a twig trellis and twig furniture will be taught at the Carroll County Cooperative Extension office on May 16, from 10 a.m. to noon. The hands-on

workshop costs \$35 and includes twigs and nails needed to complete the project. Bring tools for the class taught by nationally-known Mark Cherry, recipient of Maryland's artistic excellence award.

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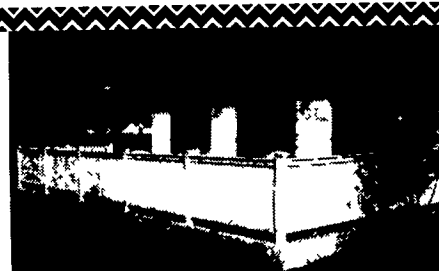
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