

'Rodeoing' Delights Lebanon Fair Queen

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Lancaster Farming Staff
NORTH CORNWALL (Lebanon Co.) — When you attend a



rodeo, you are "rodeoing," said Rebecca Shirk, newly crowned Lebanon Fair queen.

On Tuesday at the fair she spoke about one of the favorite events she likes to attend with her friends from 4-H. She also spoke about what it was like to finally wear the crown.

Rebecca, 20, daughter of Wendy and Dennis Shirk, Palmyra, often dreams about what it would be like to own a small farm and raise horses, in addition to other livestock.

That's what draws her to being a Lebanon Fairgoer. Last Saturday, some of her dreams were realized when she finally wore the coveted crown.

Rebecca, a 1997 graduate of Palmyra High School, works as a food preparer at Basket Deli in Palmyra, creating some great sandwiches and deli treats. She has dreamed of wearing the fair tiara and the spotlight it provides since

she ran for the first time last year, only to be bested by Jessica Watson, state fair queen first runner-up.

Last year, her attempts to become queen didn't go too well. "I went into it blind," Rebecca said.

This time, Rebecca knew what what to expect. She remembered the stomach butterflies. She remembered how nervous she was, how ill-prepared she may have been to the questions posed by the master of ceremonies, and the impromptu answers that were expected.

At the competition last Saturday, Rebecca contributed in a big way. "I helped calm the other girls down, because I know what it was like," she said. "We get pretty nervous."

This year, she answered an impromptu question: What would she do about racism?

Living in a town with few minorities, she learned from her

parents and her church, Gravel Hill United Methodist, about tolerance and patience and understanding. She already has seen racism firsthand. Her answer was, "to put everyone in a room and turn the lights out and learn how to talk to each other. People are more than the color of their skin," she said. "It is important to look beyond the personal appearance."

Another answer was a five-minute speech about why people should come to the fair. Rebecca's answer: "I would advertise for the fair," she said. "I would talk about the different events at the fair, what the family could do here."

She said her speech centers on the family. "The fair is more fun when you see kids with their mom and dad," she said. "I like the atmosphere of the fair — the people, and just being here."

Rebecca said she enjoys talking with people and getting to see the different events. Her favorite is rodeo, but she enjoys line dancing

and "learning about different animals," she said.

Someday, she said, she wants to live on a farm.

"I am saving money to buy some land, to maybe buy a little farm with a couple of animals, some acres, maybe with some horses and beef cattle, lambs — a little bit of everything," she said.

Rebecca spoke about how when she was younger, she remembers how much farmland her town contained. Now, it's all built up.

"And the kids in school complain about how it smells — the smell was part of growing up in a farm town," she said.

Rebecca is 4-H leader with the Little Critters 4-H, which has show rabbits.

But horses and rodeos fill her dreams.

Rebecca recalls with delight the 4-H Rodeo at the Farm show Complex during Farm Show Week.

"I love rodeoing," she said.

How To Plant Front Porch Pots

You don't have to mimic ready-made porch pots or hanging baskets to have a lovely eye-catcher for your front stoop. In fact, the plants you choose is a reflection of your own creativity.

There are a few pointers to keep in mind, though. The guiding principle for creating container displays is to select and mix plants that will thrive in their final location, said Connie Smith, an Ohio State University horticulturist. So, pots in a sunny locale should have plants that like sun; pots in the shade should have shade plants. Knowing this simple guideline will help you avoid another common beginner's mistake—mixing sun and shade plants together is a definite no-no.

Herbs, such as golden lemon thyme, make ideal low-maintenance fillers for pots in sunny locations, Smith said. Plus, they mix very well with scented geraniums for an unusual scented pot. As an added bonus, herbs are tolerant of mild drought—from when you forget to water them.

Another good filler for sunny location pots is the colorful portulaca or moss rose.

Verbena, calendula, snap dragon, geranium, alyssum and dianthus are at the top of Smith's sunny location, no-work annuals. They need very little deadheading (pinching back the flower head so the plant remains full) and also are forgiving to the forgetful waterer. For height in sunny locations, try blue salvia, such as the Strata or Victoria varieties.

Petunias are great for color—in or out of pots—but have to be pruned. Smith prunes back her petunias when she plants them, on the 4th of July and again on Labor Day to increase their flowering and keep the stems from growing out of control.

For filler in shaded pots, try lobelia, which has a pretty blue color. As for accent flowers, impatiens are a tried-and-true standard for shade. But, take a

look at the different varieties of impatiens available. Some impatiens look like miniature roses, and the New Guinea species offers dark green, broad-leafed foliage. For height and unusual leaf color and texture, consider planting brightly colored coleus.

Don't overlook standard houseplants, Smith said. Spider plants are great in hanging pots, as well as the trailing form of dusty miller and many forms of ivy. Sweet potato vine also offers a different leaf texture than the standard vinca vine. (Trailing vines add fullness and depth to your pots, so don't forget to include them)

You can plant a porch pot in anything you like, from terra cotta pots and plastic or wood containers to an old shoe or an interesting bucket. Just be sure the container has a drainage hole—and if it doesn't have one, drill it yourself.

Don't use garden soil or top soil in containers. These heavy soils retain too much moisture which causes root rot. And the soil gets hard as rock with watering. Your potting soil should be a soilless mix of ingredients that helps hold moisture, yet won't become waterlogged.

Ready-made mix is convenient to buy, but if you have a lot

of pots to fill, you can make your own. A typical recipe is one part peat moss, one part perlite and three parts sifted compost. This works well for balcony and rooftop gardens because it's light, but perlite can be costly. If weight isn't a consideration, substitute coarse sand for the perlite.

The trick is to create a happy medium between a well-drained pot that doesn't hold excessive water and a pot that needs to be watered every single day, Smith said. She puts a cut-up piece of sponge or a clean, disposable diaper in the bottom of containers to hold moisture. Also, when using terra cotta pots, she coats the inside lightly with vegetable oil so moisture evaporates more slowly.

Finally, container planters are the one place where you can ignore spacing recommendations. Pack the plants in tight, Smith said, to help retain moisture.



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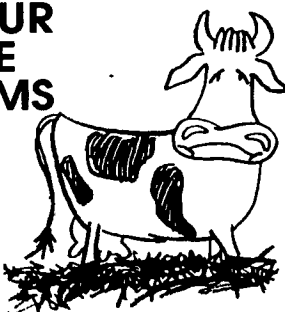
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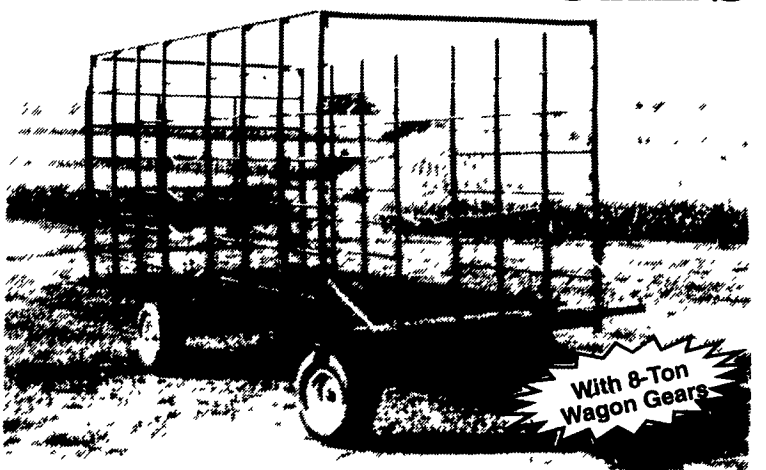
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