

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



One of my very favorite times of the year has arrived. Reward season.

Farming is a year-round endeavor, though certain times are more intensely hectic than others. Still, when one is not actually preparing, planting or harvesting, other less-visible chores need ongoing attention. Like maintaining nutrient levels, with the incorporation of manures, fertilizers, and lime. And controlling weeds, not only for crop benefits but because some species, like thistles, multi-flora rose, Johnson grass, are serious and prolific environmental pests.

Those routine-maintenance jobs aren't as emotionally satisfying as the actual harvesting of a

tall, ear-heavy stand of corn, thick windrows of sweet-smelling alfalfa hay or cascades of golden-beige soybeans pouring from a combine bin into a truck. But — face it — there's no harvest if the other routine, preparatory and maintenance-necessary stuff isn't done.

Similarly, 'tis reward season for those who year-round tend to the myriad, mundane chores of planting produce patches in anticipation of great-tasting food for the body and flowers for the soul. And while we've been enjoying fresh home-grown produce for some time, the hot-weather, gourmet garden goodies are — finally — ripening.

With favorable weather and af-

ter months of raking, cleaning, tilling, mulching, planting, weeding, gardeners are reaping their just rewards.

I hit the gardening lottery, so to speak, one recent day. And harvested the first ripe tomato . . . the first watermelon . . . the first cantaloupe . . . all in the same midmorning trip to the garden. A delicious, nutritious windfall. And non-taxable to boot. So far.

Several plantings of sunflowers of assorted types and sizes have burst open with cheery blooms. Some are yellow with dark centers, some have varied circles of color, some have a pale magenta hue and at least one is blooming in a maroon shade. Sunflower blooms traditionally follow the sun with their faces, so I located them where their "afternoon faces" would be visible from the house. So why do most of the blooms persist in facing east — away from the house?

Though by anticipation of enjoying their cheerful blooms from the back porch has been somewhat thwarted, they are still lovely. The other intent, that they attract the yellow finches which love to snitch sunflower seeds right out of the heads, is rewarding us with increased visits by these flashy little birds.

Sweet peas and nasturtiums, two floral varieties I've fiddled with for several years without much success, are thriving and blooming. Neither transplants well so, in desperation, I started the seeds of each in tiny, individual peat pots. The fragrance of the pastel pink, purple and blue sweet peas vining over the garden fence, and the glo-orange nasturtium blooms outside the calf nursery, has rewarded this lucky experiment.

Predictably, one of the neatest rewards of the garden so far is an unexpected one.

While relatives were gathering some of our abundant sweet corn one day, I ran to the garden for a bouquet of gladioli blooms to

share. Though I mislaid one bag of the bulbs and it was planted later, they are all blooming concurrently and pushing out abundant spikes of colorful flowers.

And, there, zipping around above the planting of bright pink and yellow spikes was a hummingbird. The first hummingbird I've seen near the garden in ages. I stopped dead in my tracks, broke off a few of the closest spikes and left the rest. If that hummingbird wants those gladiolus blooms, it shall have them.

Proving again that lots of life's rewards come unplanned. Unexpected. Pure serendipity.

So we just need to enjoy them right where they turn up.

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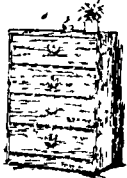
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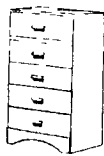
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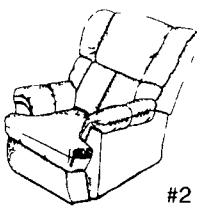
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