

# 'Cookery' Holds Fond Memories For Berks Outstanding Farm Family

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florists keeps them busy.

For the Ernst family, the busiest season for the greenhouse comes Easter Week.

"It's the most stressful week of the year," said Linda. "If you can get through Easter week, I tell them, you can get through anything."

"Friends come to help," said Walter. "We get a lot of help from them."

The Ernst family care for Easter plants and spring bedding plants. Easter plant bulbs — including tulips, hyacinths, and daffodils — are planted at the end of October. Lilies are planted the second week of December into six-inch pots. They can plant up to four in the pot.

Poinsettias are single-stem and can be planted up to 15 per pot. They include mixed and red, white, pink, marble, and "jingle bells," said Walter.

Linda said they prefer the single-stem poinsettias because they provide the largest flower. "That's why flower shops want our plants," she said.

The least stressful time for the business doesn't come until August, when it's simply too hot, noted Walter. "That's when we take our vacation — going to the fairs," he said, smiling.

Linda and Walter are both 1958 graduates of Kutztown High School. Walter worked on his grandfather's greenhouse and flower business in Kutztown and moved to his father's operation where he now resides in October 1963.

The house they reside includes an attached addition to the original glass greenhouse. There are four glass greenhouses and additional plastic greenhouses at the site.

Walter serves as director of the fair board, a position he's had since the mid-1970s. He's also been a director of the Berks Coun-

ty Sheep and Wool Growers for many years.

Walter and Linda also serve on the Gouglersville Grange. Walter is gatekeeper and Linda is lecturer. They also belong to the Pomona Grange.

The Ernst family includes David, who works at the Reading Hospital; Valerie, who works as a homemaker and freelance floral arranger; and another son, Steven, who works in the cardboard display advertising business in Shillington.

Walter and Linda have three grandchildren, a daughter of David, Erica, who is 12; and a son and daughter of Valerie, Tyler, 3, and Brielle, 7.

The grandkids help on the farm, Linda noted, and have fun.

Showing at the fairs is a high-

light of the year.

Thirty-two years ago Walter remembered getting his first crossbred sheep at the Leesport Market, a "starter herd," he said. After many years the herd quickly became a purebred Suffolk operation with 20 ewes with a good lambing crop.

Now, "We enjoy educating the public," said Walter. "We got a lot of questions about the sheep at Kimberton." But the memories of the Fairgrounds Mall remain.

"We did a better job of educating people when the fair was at the mall," said Linda. "People went shopping when they were in the mall and came to see the fair."

More coverage of winners at the Outstanding Farm Family Awards banquet is included in this issue of *Lancaster Farming*.



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Walter D.'s pride and joy are the ready-for-show purebred Suffolk sheep, including about 20 ewes and four rams, boarded at the site. Walter raises lambs for sale to youth at several regional shows.

## Asian Tiger Mosquito Found In Maryland

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — According to Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Virts, there has been a significant increase in the distribution of the Asian tiger mosquito in Maryland.

From an initial finding in Baltimore City in 1987, the tiger mosquito has extended its range in 1998 to 10 Maryland counties.

Over the past three years, tiger mosquito populations have become established in southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore.

"We are concerned about this addition to the mosquito species found in Maryland. The tiger mosquito is difficult to control, is a vector of several disease agents and is an aggressive biting pest," Virts said.

The tiger mosquito, *Aedes albopictus*, is native to Asia, where its natural habitat is forests. It usually is associated with tires, particularly used tires which, when stored or discarded outside, provide excellent breeding sites.

The tires, when transported for resale or disposal, provide a means to disperse mosquito eggs, larvae and adults over long distances. It is believed that a shipment of old tires from Asia to the United States for reprocessing is

responsible for the introduction of tiger mosquitoes to America in 1985.

"It has adapted very well to urban and residential environments where containers such as cups, cans and bottles serve as breeding sites. A discarded plastic cup with as little as one-half inch of water can produce dozens of tiger mosquitoes," said Virts.

According to Cy Lesser, chief of Maryland's Mosquito Control Program, conventional mosquito control practices are not effective against tiger mosquitoes.

"The habits of the tiger mosquito are different from native mosquitoes. Tiger mosquito larvae are found in containers, not in natural wetlands, and the adult tiger mosquitoes are most active during daylight and at dusk, not at night," Lesser said.

Searching for and controlling tiger mosquito larvae is extremely labor intensive and logistically difficult. Most adult mosquito control spraying operations are conducted at night when tiger mosquitoes are not active and are not affected by the insecticide applied.

The most effective method of controlling tiger mosquitoes is the

removal of the larval breeding sites. This requires the cooperation and participation of the community to rid properties of containers or to prevent containers from holding water for long periods.

Suggested activities for individuals or groups to use to prevent or reduce populations of tiger mosquitoes include:

- Clean rain gutters to allow water to drain.
- Remove old tires or drill drainage holes in tires used for playground equipment.
- Store wading pools inside or turn them upside down when not in use.
- Turn over or remove clay pots and plastic containers.
- Dispose of all empty beverage containers, plastic wrappers, discarded toys, etc.
- Drain water from plastic or canvas tarps used to cover boats, pools, etc.
- Drain the bilges of boats kept on trailers and keep canoes and small boats stored upside down.
- Replace water in bird baths at least twice a week.
- Remove outside pet food and water dishes that are not being used.



Walter and Linda Ernst rent land from Walter's father, Walter H. Ernst, and operate 12 greenhouses on about four acres south of Reading. This year the greenhouses are home to about 24,000 poinsettias for the upcoming holiday season encompassing about 28,000 square feet, noted Ernst.

- Don't leave garbage can lids lying upside down. Do not allow water to collect in the bottom of garbage cans.
- Flush water in the bottom of plant holders twice a week.
- Turn wheelbarrows upside down when stored outside.

For additional information about mosquito control or the Asian tiger mosquito, contact Mr. Cyrus Lesser at the Maryland Department of Agriculture, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401, Telephone 410-841-5870.