

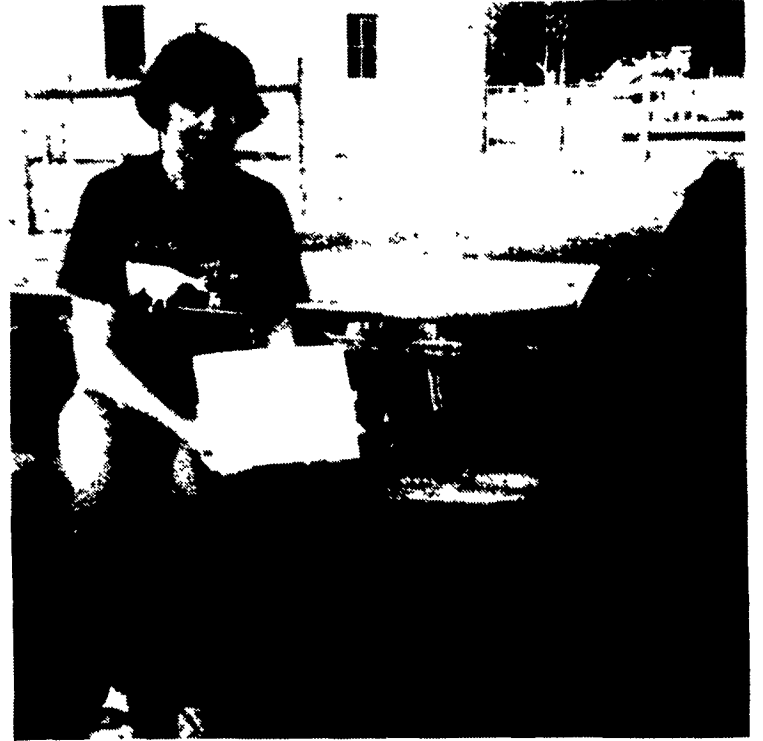
Zerpheys Receive Premium Wool Award

HALIFAX (Dauphin Co.) — Sheepberry Farms received a Premium Wood Producer Award from Mid-States Wool Growers Association. This award was for wool grown by John & Lynn Zerphey's 200+ sheep during the 1997-98 wool growing season.

Wool is one of the four basic products of sheep production, wool, lanolin, lamb for breeding stock, and lamb for consumption. The Zerpheys raise sheep to market to all four areas of sheep production, but take special care of their wool as many fleeces are shown at fairs and sold to fiber artists or craftspeople. Clean, healthy wool is a reflection of a healthy, productive sheep flock. The Zerpheys work very hard to maintain their flock in the best health and safe, stress-free conditions. "A happy, contented sheep is a productive sheep" said shepherd John Zerphey.

To prepare their wool for the mill or selling to craftspeople, the process begins at shearing. A professional sheep shearer is employed along with seasoned sheep handlers to bring the sheep to the shearing area. The Zerphey's use professional shearer, Peter Brummer of Millerstown, who received Champion Shearers Awards at the 1997 and 1998 State Farm Show Sheep-to-Shawl Contests. Brummer is aware the value of wool and shears with few second cuts (short pieces of wool) and leaving the fleece whole.

The sheep is sheared in a clean area and the fleece is then skirted to remove wool that may be coarse or soiled. Usually in skirting a fleece the belly wool and fibers at the back end of the sheep are removed and bagged separately. The fleeces are then classed as to their grade, fine, medium, or coarse, and natural



Lynn Zerphey of Sheepberry Farms, Halifax, displays the premium wool award from Mid States Wool.

or black wool; then each is bagged separately.

The Zerpheys are experienced at wool classing and grading, since Lynn Zerphey is a Level II Wool Classifier, certified by the American Industry. To receive a Level II certificate, Lynn had to class 100,000 pounds of wool with a certified Wool Classifier in the American Sheep Industry. To gain experience in wool classing, Zerphey traveled to Kansas and Ohio to large wool warehouses to class wool, and also worked at various wool pools in Pennsylvania to meet her 100,000 pounds of wool.

"As a hand spinner and sheep grower, I felt I needed to have knowledge about wool," said Lynn Zerphey, "as people would come to our farm to buy wool and ask about the quality and

grade. As a producer I need to supply my customers with accurate information."

The Zerphey show their wool at a variety of shows and fairs throughout the state and even out of state, receiving many awards.

"The ribbons and our satisfied customer reinforce that we are doing good job in our sheep and wool production" says Lynn Zerphey.

The award from Mid-States Wool, located in Columbus, Ohio, is the "frosting on the cake" for Sheepberry Farms' wool. "When a large co-operative like Mid-States likes your wool," said Lynn Zerphey, "I feel we are being rewarded for all our hard work, since quality wool will command a better selling price."

All Gardens
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SEASON-EXTENDERS

With colder nights approaching, season-extending devices and temporary covers may help in the garden. Colder temperatures especially at night tend to slow down plant growth. Cauliflower, celery, chinese cabbage, leeks, lettuce, onions, parsley, and peas prefer daytime air temperatures from 45° to 75° F, while beets, broccoli, cabbage, kohlrabi, radish, spinach and swiss chard prefer colder daytime temperatures down to 40°F.

A portable cold frame, also called a choche makes an excellent season extender. Gardeners use everything including cardboard boxes, double glass frames, blankets, and paper bags. Most are easy to use. For glass frame types, the soil is warmed along with the air inside. Other season extenders include recent inventions including tunnels, agricultural row covers, and black plastic.

For frost protection in a small garden, one-gallon glass jug, or bell jar works well to cover individual plants. Most temporary covers are removed in the morning unless well ventilated. A plastic 2-liter soft drink bottle make an inexpensive cloche. Cut off the bottom, punch ventilation holes using a nail in the sides and lower into the soil two to three inches. Plastic milk jugs also work with the bottom cut

out. Tomato cages covered in plastic with the top open works well for some plants.

Polyethylene tunnels can extend the growing season 30 to 60 days. Tunnels permit harvesting later in the season. The term row covers or agricultural fleece describes one of several lightweight fabrics used by farmers. These light, easy to use covers rest on the soil and the plant. Made of spun-bonded polyester, row covers allow sunlight and water to penetrate the soil while cutting down on plant damage from wind.

Fortunately, row covers only protect against close to freezing temperatures. Tender crops are protected one to two degrees below freezing for an hour or so using a row cover. A double layer provides more frost protection. Row covers have a useful life of three to four years. After removing them from the field, gardeners can soak in water, rinse and hang on a clothesline to dry for next spring.

Two to four weeks past the first light frost the season has passed for many vegetable crops. Carrots and cabbage thrive even with a light frost. Spinach and peas also tolerate mild frosts.

Any questions regarding the above article can be addressed to Tom Becker, Penn State Cooperative Extension at (717) 840-7408.

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