

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



One more time. Or maybe not? No one could accuse us of being obsessed with lawn care. There are simply too many other crops to maintain here on the farm to get hung-up on having a perfect stretch of grass around the house. And the lawn's appearance often testifies to that.

One romp through soggy bluegrass by a couple of heel-kicking heifers can wreak havoc that takes weeks to undo. And a cow with a sore foot, turned out for R and R in the shade of the trees for extra comfort and better footing, creates its own set of lawn problems. On baking hot summer days, The Farmer will occasionally park

the tractor and hay wrower under the trees in the shade to do midday maintenance repairs. Or run through it with the backhoe en route to perform some dig-out chore around the barn. And there's practically a packer trail through the yard made from his endless trips back and forth with the four-wheeler, hand-spray-rig for field spot-spraying.

Often, at this time of year, if it weren't for crabgrass, there'd be no grass at all in a few corners. Especially after the prolonged hot, dry spell we've had. While finer grasses hunker down and wait for more favorable growing conditions, crabgrass thumbs its nose at heat and dry and sends up more distant shoots in defiance.

All that said, I still enjoy mowing the lawn.

In early spring, it's a delight to climb aboard our aged riding

mower and trim the clumpy green growth that by first-mowing is thick and lush in our low-lying, damp lawn. The spring bulbs are still in bloom and perennials are resprouting confident new growth. And the fresh-cut grass smell is absolutely heavenly.

That first mowing is a true rite of early spring, a ceremonial salute to the coming of the growing season.

By September, the novelty of mowing lawn has worn a little thin, like the browning grass gasping at the roots of the maple trees. The coarse, fall grasses have choked out the more delicate lawn turf. And while the prolonged dry spell of the past several weeks have halted the grass growth, those straggly weeds just keep thriving.

Still, looking out the kitchen

window over a raggy lawn bothers me. So, the mower is fired up one more time to trim those indomitable weeds and level off the more enthusiastic clumps of fall growth. The thatch residue is thin enough it is no longer necessary to rake and gather the clippings. No matter, since the trimmings are no longer needed to mulch the fading veggie patch. And the low-moisture grass no longer gives off that intense, wonderful smell of new-mown lawn.

But the lawn mower seat makes a great observation post to assess the year's horticultural successes and failures. Invasive grass is having its way with the daylilies and the rosebushes need to be trimmed. Last fall's butterfly bush addition — bought on sale and partially flattened during the winter by a stampede of invading cows — has tripled in size and continues to

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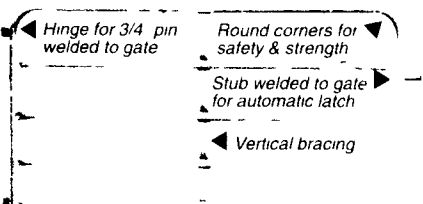
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bloom. Canna roots dug up two years ago, and which froze to mush overnight in a chilling temperature drop, have sent up new shoots this year from tiny bits of root apparently left behind in the ground.

And the multiple plants propagated from one double-blossomed, fuchsia-shaded geranium given by a friend a couple of years ago continue to bloom cheerfully in the border.

Such surprises are the delights that keep gardeners always digging ahead toward another year.

And keeps lawn mowing — for the most part — more a pleasure than a chore.

Even as we mow the aging grass.

One more time.

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