

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



It was a good year here. For corn.

It was a good year here. For soybeans.

It was a good year here. For tomatoes. Well, once they finally got growing.

It was not a good year here. For pumpkins.

We are truly grateful for this year's crops, because it was not a good year for farmers in many parts of the country, some of them not very far away. Corn, along with hay, is the backbone of our year's supply of cattle feed. Soybeans are both feed and sales crop. But both grain crops are of vital economic importance to our business plan.

The bumper crop of tomatoes,

though they were frustratingly slow to ripen, have filled the jar shelf in the basement with ample supplies of material for soups, spaghetti, chili, plus a nice stockpile of salsa ready to open and dip into. Our 30 or so tomato plants fed us and friends for the past several weeks and we treasure each fresh, delicious one from the dwindling stockpile left after a couple of light frosts.

While the garden tomato crop plays no significant role in our farm business, the end results still mean several less items on the ever-present, grocery-shopping list. And food on the shelf is worth something in economic value.

Pumpkins offer a different

story. Two years ago, we harvested about a quarter-ton of pumpkins from the small section of pumpkin patch between the old and new dairy barns. Last year's sparse planting was promptly—within hours—trampled to oblivion by escaped heifers.

Good thing that pumpkins don't factor into our farm business plan because this year's pumpkin yield is on the meager side. And that's apparently the story around the region, not good news for produce farmers who do factor pumpkins into their sales numbers. While there's a pumpkin harvest out there, as evidenced by lovely displays at area farm markets, there doesn't seem to be the abundance or size of some seasons. Too long wet in the spring, too long chilly in early summer, too long hot and dry in August and September.

Jack-o-lanterns will probably be a little more pricey this season, in response to that basic economic law of supply and demand.

Some of the more aggressive vines in our little patch had recently begun poking fingers of inquisitive growth up outside the wall and in through the open

windows of the dairy barn, until cooler weather slowed their enthusiasm. Usually, the planting is a mix of a few of the round, decorative, jack-o-lantern types, and more of the pie-pumpkin varieties. Not one of the pie types grew this time, not a problem since the freezer still holds some leftover from other seasons.

None are the giants of some years. The dozen or so are medium to small, with oodles of green ones, which will never get close to ripening before a killer frost fixes them.

So I've picked a few each day and hauled them onto the front porch with some mature-orange summer squash, bumpy-textured volunteer gourds from the brush pile and a couple of Jack-Be-Little gourds from the garden patch. Midnight, the porch cat, curls up nearby on the rug

for a snooze, adding the perfect black-cat touch for a seasonal display.

While our farm business does not depend on pumpkins, they do offer a valuable return.

Pumpkins make people smile. Just watch a little kid in a pumpkin patch. These orange orbs are symbolic of the harvest, and bounty, and all the warm-fuzzy, fun-feelings that go with the season of dressing up and getting treats (Make mine chocolate, please.)

Our meager pumpkin harvest may not amount to much, economics-wise. But the grins they generate when your share them with kids are priceless.

So while international monetary interests and world stock markets continue to gyrate, pumpkins at least guarantee us a solid return in that "mutual fun" investments.

Holiday Fest

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.)
— "Holiday Fest: A Time for Everyone" is sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension Women's Leadership Committee on Thursday, November 12, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Colonial Park United Methodist Church, Crums Mill Road, Harrisburg.

The morning keynote address, "Migraines: Get This Pain Out of My Head" is presented by neurologist, Dr. Emily Martin.

The conference offers the following choices of workshops: "Hors D'Oeuvres - Easy, Healthy, and Fun" presented by gourmet home chefs and "Who Gets Mama's Dishes," an estate management is presented by Attorney

William Bunt. "Bringing Joy into the Holiday Spending" presented by certified money manager Patricia Powley and "Living in the '90s with Expectations of the '50s" presented by Natalie Ferry, Penn State Cooperative Extension.

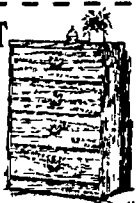
The event is sponsored by the PSU Cooperative Extension in Dauphin, Cumberland, Juniata, Mifflin, and Perry counties. Cost for the event before Friday, October 30, is \$20 per person including lunch or \$25 after Friday, October 30. Conference is limited to 100 participants with pre-registration required. To obtain a registration booklet contact Dauphin County Cooperative at 921-8803.

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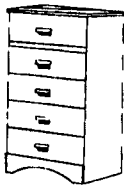


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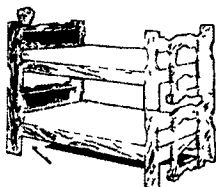


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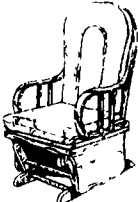


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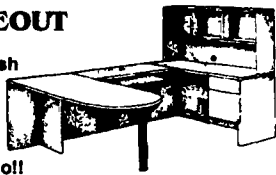


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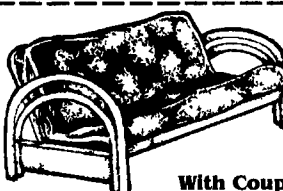
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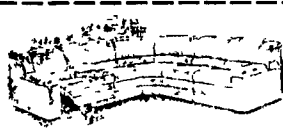


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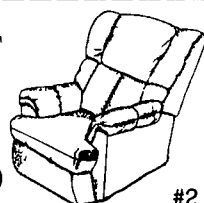


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