

**On Being a  
Farm Wife**

(and other  
hazards)

Joyce Bupp



That telltale dusting.

Pale white. Like a ghost at dawn. Sprinkled over the tops of the round bales in the meadow, like sugar on a doughnut.

Frost. Imminent hint of what's to come. Sooner. Or later.

So the calendar says October. But in reality, the first real Big Chill turns a pretend-page to an imaginary 13th month squeezed in. A time-period of lingering year-end chores. A time we might call the month of Transition.

During the month of Transition, out comes the electric blanket. Away goes the window fan.

Up go the screens and down come the storm panes in the house windows. Completing that dreaded job is always cause for celebration - it means the annual window-washing is over. Which always desperately needs to be done.

Transition means putting the shorts and lightweight teeshirts into the back of the closet. And replacing them with thermal underwear and heavier socks.

Away go the sandals and out come the knee boots. The summer blessing of running bare-

footed is a bane in winter to those of us who are cold-feet intolerant. While we're at it, unearth the lightweight gloves and sweatshirts and sweaters and quilted flannel shirts for barn chores on freeze-flirting mornings.

Banished during Transition are the cotton-poly-blend summer sheets and warmly embraced are the soft, fluffy, flannel replacements. Crawling between electric-blanket warmed sheets in a non-heated room on a frosty night is a cheap luxury. Why shiver when one can be toasty-warm with little extra cost or effort?

Transition closes the basement and upstairs doors, slowing the flow of chilly air which permeates every corner of this old house. Transition fires up the woodstove, burning it low, but generating drying warmth to chase the perpetual fall chill. When this shaded, brick house gets damp, it stays damp until coaxed into comfort with supplemental heat.

We begin hoarding our diminishing supply of ripe tomatoes, and lean more on a refrigerator

stash of the gorgeous heads of cauliflower which come into their glory during Transition. The Farmer and our grandson hauled some beauties home from a roadside produce stand, a seasonably-dependable treat sold along one of the routes they travel for equipment parts. Keeping the white curds company was the largest head of cabbage I have ever laid eyes on. Even after slicing off and sharing part of it, we went into cabbage overdrive to keep it from going to waste. Our Transition-time dining has leaned toward cabbage slaw, boiled cabbage, cabbage-based vegetable soup, etc., etc.

Transition clears the porch of its summer houseplants, moved to the greenhouse and windowsills, or reduced to cuttings for the first gardening season in the next century. (Or the last one in this century, depending on which math philosophy you follow.) Spurred by frost threats, we lift amaryllis bulbs and dahlia roots, lop off sunflower heads, pick the last lima beans, pot up the geraniums, and mark colors of the mums in bloom for dividing in spring.

Replacing them in the ground are bulbs - tulips and hyacinths, daffodil, daffodils and more daffodils. While planting out summer annuals in May, I unearthed several clumps of "daffs" which needed to be separated. Now a bucketful of them patiently waits to be tucked into new homes on some nice Transition afternoon.

During Transition, the "girls" get a daily vacation outside, as we turn them out on the fields to harvest tender ryegrass and leafy, late alfalfa. Despite having

half the farm to roam over - temporarily fenced - at least one or two daily must go poke around along the interstate highway barrier. Blessed are our friends, neighbors, and perfect strangers who call or stop by to warn us of these adventurous troublemakers.

And greeting me on the front porch just moments ago was not one, not two, but three of the

season of Transitions most notable "logos." fuzzy, black-and-brown Woolly Bear caterpillars. One worming its way into a tiny space between the bricks. Another wiggling up the front door. The third, right behind it. All appeared to be deliberately trying to get in the house.

Woolly Bears seeking house-interior refuge during Transition.

It that scary or what?

## Generate Daylily Plants

COLUMBUS, Ohio — There are many diverse varieties of daylilies. Wild daylilies are yellow to red, by hybridizers have created many new colors. A variety named "Outrageous" is a bright-orange color with a bright-red eye (inside the throat of the flower) that bleeds into the petals.

Ohio State's John Finer, a plant geneticist at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster, said it's simple to make your own flower crosses and generate intriguing new colors for your garden.

To cross daylilies, first tear out the anther - the part containing shedding yellow pollen - from the flower. Next, gently rub the yellow pollen on to the end of the stigma of another flower. In each flower, there will be six anthers, or male parts, one stigma, or female part. If the cross is successful, a seed pod will begin forming inside the flower in about one week.

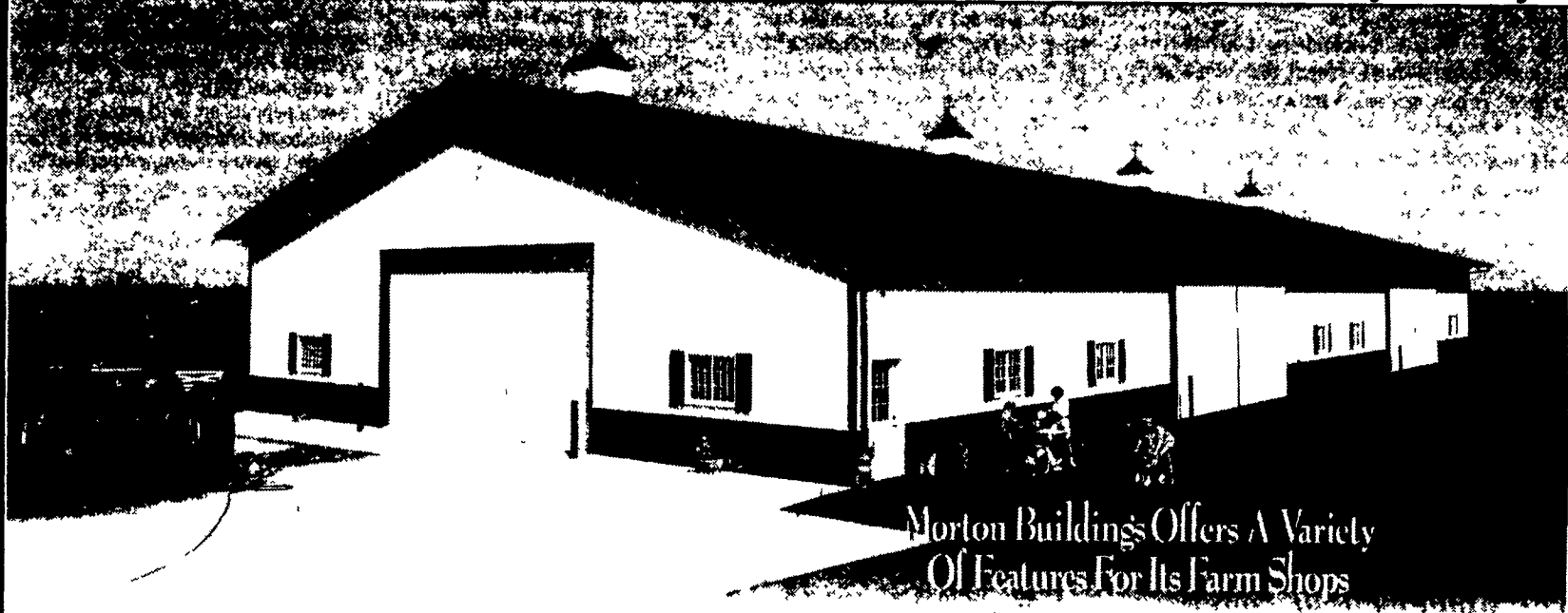
After the pod forms, seed har-

vesting is necessary. The seeds should be harvested before the pod dries out and spills its contents. Remove the pod and open it, removing all seeds. Allow the seeds to air dry for about two weeks. After they air dry, store them in the refrigerator for two or four more weeks and then plant them in moist soil and allow plenty of sunlight.

Finer said his daughter, who helps him cross daylily varieties at home, likens the process to painting. "We mix colors to create new shades, and by mixing the proper combinations of genes from a daylily cross, you can produce new and unusual flower colors."

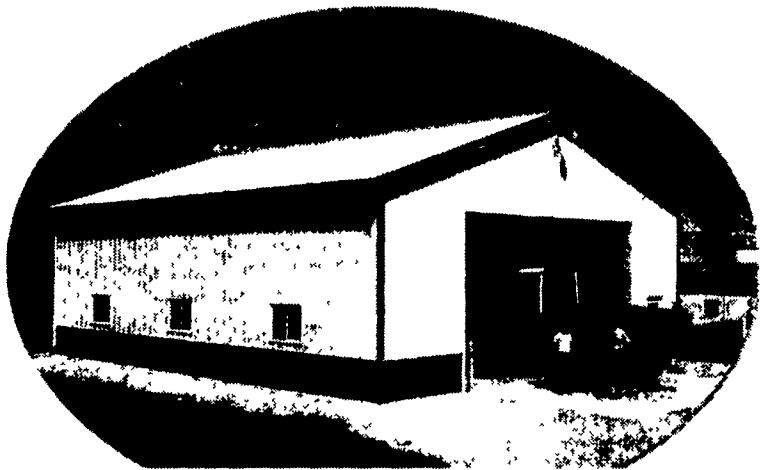
Anyone can cross daylilies or other flowers and harvest the seeds that develop. Crossing daylilies can be both fun and rewarding, but patience is important in the creative process. Finer said it could take up to three years before the seeds produced from your daylily cross are mature enough to produce flowers.

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