

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

"What are these?"

That was the puzzled question asked by the friendly, young checkout clerk tallying my bill at a local supermarket a few days ago.

The plastic bag she held up in inquiry contained an undeniable sign of spring.

"Those are onion sets," I explained.

To her blank, questioning look I offered farther explanation: "You plant them in the garden to grow onions."

"I've never heard of them," she admitted, searching the most current list of produce prices to ring up my couple of handfuls of 99-cents-per-pound baby yellow onions.

"Onion bulbs?" she puzzled, flipping through the price listings.

"Well, they might be called that," I hesitated, quoting the price I had seen posted on the cardboard bins of white and yellow onion sets which had flagged me down as I passed them in the produce section. Inevitably, it took an investigative trip by another checkout employee to search out the computer number assigned to identify and price my puzzling little bulbs cradled in the plastic bag.

"Onion sets," announced the returning produce detective, after about a two-minute search through the extensive produce section, confirming my 61-cent purchase of spring promise.

"Don't think I'll bother planting onions this year," I had told The Farmer just a day or so before. Several summer-like afternoons had sent me forth with rake and shovel to clean up last year's garden residue and begin preparations for the upcoming planting season.

But there they were in the supermarket, these onion sets, begging me to take them home. And, there was a section of dark, moist ground I had just finished sprinkling with lime and covering with a stretch of discarded silo-cover black plastic to warm the soil for early plantings. How

could I ignore this opportunity?

Snagged again by spring fever.

Besides, we use lots of onions. Those alluring onion sets popping up for sale at all sorts of retailers are just one of the clues that spring is officially about to happen. No doubt, though, we'll continue to have to alternate shorts and tee-shirts with jeans and heavy sweaters as the fickle season inches forward and the sun creeps a little higher each day.

A vase of slender twigs covered with fat, furry catkins sits on the dining area hutch, courtesy of the nearly 40-year-old pussywillow tree which now towers over a backyard flowerbed. The pussywillow has grown so tall that its fuzz-bearing stems can only be snipped by climbing into the heart of the tree and leaning precariously at angles to reach the young, bloom-bearing growth.

Meanwhile, their cousins, the weeping willows, have transformed from their yellowish, late-winter tint to the green of early Spring. They offer great camouflage to the goldfinches, which are growing their summer plumage and happen to be just about the same shade as the willows.

Three perky daffodil blooms occupy a small vase on the kitchen sink, their white and yellow blossoms like smiles warming a chilly morning. A couple of potted primroses add bright shades of fuchsia, orange and blue-violet tucked in among the Christmas cyclamens still bearing pink and red blooms.

And, even if none of nature's plant signs were so obvious of the impending season, another dead-giveaway clue is creating a racket in the meadow. The Canada geese have returned to the pond, with the usual honking, flapping and splashing as the dominant breeding pair stakes out territorial boundaries, relegating the others to less choice spots.

Spring has definitely arrived. 'Scuse me, please. I gotta' go plant onions.

Sap Is Running In Pennsylvania Reading Terminal Market Celebrates the Pennsylvania Maple Harvest



Ed Emerick of Emerick Maple Products pours fresh maple sap into a jug before preparing to make maple syrup.

PHILADELPHIA (Philadelphia Co.)—Did you know it takes 40-50 gallons of maple sap to make one gallon of maple syrup? Or that Pennsylvania is the fourth-largest producer of maple syrup in the U.S.

This March, grab your sweet tooth and head to Reading Terminal Market for a sugary, sticky celebration.

Maple syrup is the nectar of choice this March at Reading Terminal Market, 12th and Arch Streets, Philadelphia. On March 24 and 25, from 10-4 p.m. the Market celebrates the traditional rite of maple sugaring with MAPLE DAZE, a celebration of the Pennsylvania Maple Harvest.

The free event features special guest, Ed Emerick, Blue Ribbon Winner and owner of Emerick Maple Products, demonstrating turning maple sap into maple syrup. In addition to gallons and gallons of fresh syrup, maple candy, maple cream, maple fudge, maple baked goods, and maple toffee corn, the 2000 celebration kicks off with The Battle of the Short Order Cooks: Melrose Diner versus Down Home Diner.

The popular Maple Cafe is back, this year run by Project Home. The celebration includes loads of cooking demonstrations using fresh maple syrup, Pennsylvania crafts people, and children's activities. Maple Daze is hosted by the Pennsylvania general Store.

For more information on Maple Daze or other events, go to readingterminalmarket.org or call (215) 922-2317.

8th Annual Antique Apple Grafting Seminar

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)—Participants in the eighth Annual Antique Apple Grafting seminar is scheduled on Saturday, March 25 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the Visitor Center of Landis Valley Museum will be given hands-on instruction for grafting apple trees. The seminar fee is \$20.

The seminar is hosted by the Heirloom Seed Project of Landis Valley Museum and the Backyard Fruit Growers who work together to preserve historic varieties of fruit trees found in Pennsylvania German orchards.

The afternoon seminar will include personal grafting training, written instructions on planting, two rootstocks and dozens of fruitwood scions. If

you have a favorite apple or pear tree, you may bring your own. This is a great way to begin a new back yard orchard or add to an existing orchard. Call Landis Valley Museum at (717) 569-0401 ext. 204 today to register.

Landis Valley Museum is a Pennsylvania German living history village and is owned and operated by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission with support from the Landis Valley Associates.

Museum hours are 9-5 Monday through Saturday, 12-5 Sunday. Landis Valley is located 2.5 miles north of Lancaster of Route 272/Oregon Pike, a marked exit off both Route 30 and Route 222. Individuals with disabilities who need special assistance or accommodations should call in advance to discuss their needs. PA TDD relay service is available at (800) 564-5984. Call (717) 569-0401 for more information.



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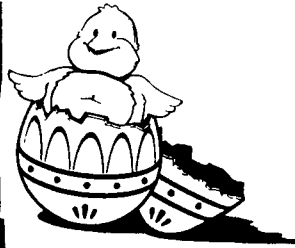
Testimony, Information & Training Meeting
Quality Inn, 2363 Oregon Pike, Lancaster
Sat., April 15 - 9:00 am - 3:30 pm
717-656-6408 or 1-800-237-0400

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