

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



"Does it get any hotter than this?" That was the plaintive plea posed recently by a perspiring newcomer to the area, experiencing a first taste of south-central Pennsylvania's July weather.

"How do you stand this?" groaned another friend, stepping from a meeting in an air-conditioned room out into one of our steamy, sauna-like, summer afternoons.

Both of these comments came from folks originating from more northern regions and not accustomed to living in the "three H's" which personify our York County summers: heat...haze...humidity.

It's that trio of uncomfortable "H" words that has always made mid-July my least favorite time of the year.

Well, in some ways.

But in others, July explodes into this star-spangled season, ushered in by our collective national birthday we just celebrated. (And which is apparently

still being celebrated in our neighborhood by the sound of an occasional, leftover, noisy fire-cracker.)

Just a year ago, July rolled out a continuous string of desert-dry days, earmarked on our area farms by parched, cracking soil, curling cornstalks and livestock packing into the deepest shady spot they could find, panting to cool off. We could make gorgeous dry alfalfa hay. There was just precious little of it. Despite the dry soil, we still had July's triadsome trio: heat, haze, humidity.

Nature, we've always heard, abhors a vacuum. And thus far into this new century, she seems bent on filling the moisture deficit which plagued us in the fading months of the last one. Drips and drizzles, downpours and gully-washers, cloudbursts, thunder-lighting-fireworks, hail, wrapped up with the occasional cheery, upside-down heavenly smile in the form of a rainbow.

July's explosive response to this "monsoon moisture" — which often seems to come on the heels of a dry season — is a veritable jungle of greenery, lush both where it's supposed to be as well as lots of places we'd prefer not to have foliage. Like in rain-gutters, building foundation cracks, poking out of walls, creeping up the side of our brick house, even on machinery nooks and crannies where small collections of field dust have accumulated.

She's also thrown in a few "critters." Around her, if you stood still for more than a moment after the sun set, or on a cloudy day, you might have found slugs oozing up your ankles. Slimy, squishy, ever-hungry, plant-chewing, rusty-brown slugs.

We've found slugs in flower-pots and under buckets left parked outside. Slugs oozing up weeds and slithering their way over wet sidewalks. Slugs on dahlias and slugs on string beans, slugs under black plastic, and residing under grass mulch. The Farmer replanted some slug-chewed blank spot in the soybean fields, while I replaced some garden veggie stalks.

The little slimers have a special affinity for honeydew melon stalks, though goodness knows why. After repeatedly sprinkling them with an organic, anti-slug powder (which kept getting rain-

ed off), a few days of breezy sunshine probably did more than anything to combat the spineless pests.

More than making up for the super slugs is the stunning beauty of farm country responding to sun and rain: thick alfalfa growth (if we can get it dry!), corn stalking skyward at an almost visible pace, and fields of wheat flowing in gentle waves of dusty gold. Watermelon vines in the garden sneaking across their black-plastic beds at the rate of about a foot a day, flowers have burst into a paintbox of color all around us and the often-tired lawns of mid-summer are still green, as well, grass.

In answer to the question concerning if its getting hotter than the mid-90's we've already seen — coupled with what some days feels like triple-digit-humidity — I assured our newcomer that it wouldn't get very much hotter than that. It just might last longer at a time.

Still, the oppressive heat, haze and humidity is easier to tolerate knowing that, in not too many weeks, summer's worst will be well on its way toward "pushing up daisies."

For now, we're plumb tickled that it's so busy pushing up corn and hay and beans and tomatoes and potatoes and melons and squash and cucumbers and...which brings us to another "H" words.

Hungry.

**Spotting Fad Diets**

- Claims to or implies to produce a quick weight loss of more than one to two pounds per week. Slow, gradual weight loss increases the chance of weight loss success and of keeping weight off over the long term.

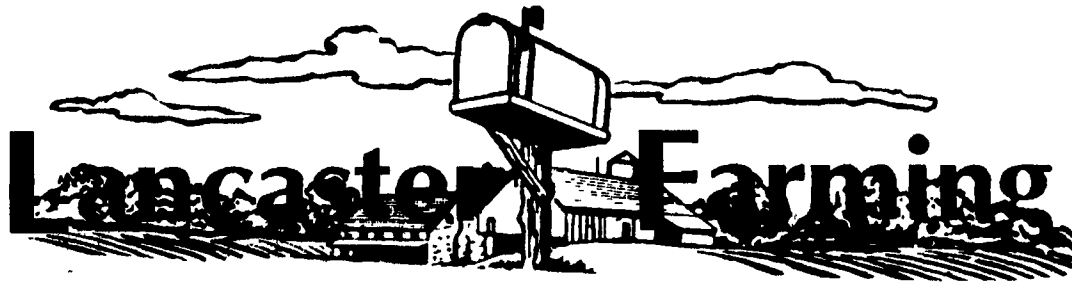
- Promotes magical or miracle foods. No foods can undo the long-term effects of overeating and not exercising or melt away fat.

- Restricts or eliminates certain foods, recommends certain foods in large quantities, insists on eating specific food combinations, or offers rigid, inflexible menus.

- Implies that weight can be lost and maintained without exercise and other lifestyle changes.

- Relies heavily on undocumented case histories, testimonials, and anecdotes but has no scientific research to back claims.

- Contradicts what most trusted health professional groups say, or makes promises that sound too good to be true.



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