


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



Tidy-up time is upon us. If you doubt that, just look around at all the folks raking leaves.

Grass growth has slowed, weeds have gone dead or dormant — or to seed, as in the case of far too many in the flower beds — and everyone is bustling around trying to tidy up all those loose ends of summer past. And, if your place is anything like ours, about the time you have one set of loose ends neatly tied corralled, a bunch more have unraveled.

Loads of small bales of old grass hay sit abandoned around the equipment parking area

below the house, awaiting an unloading crew to hitch them to a tractor, haul them to the barn and stack them away. This reserve supply of bedding was acquired at a local farm sale, and needed to be promptly removed from the property. Moving them off the sold property was the haste factor in getting them loaded onto the wagons; stacking them away is farther down the tidy-up priority list.

Other pieces of equipment keep them

company, all waiting their turn behind that ultimate fall clean-up chore-finishing the soybean and corn harvests and seeding the last acres of fall-planted grain.

Those major tasks completed, tidy-up priorities will shuffle around to hauling out loads of bedding pack manure accumulated through the summer and "graduating" all the heifers and calves to next-size-up pens.

Frames and coverings of windows in those various heifer facilities must be fastened in and closed up. Or fixed. Or, in some cases, invented. And homes found for the oversized, summer-heat barn fans.

Though some leaves are piling up around the yard and buildings, raking them is not a tidy-up priority here. Our Norway maples surrounding the house are the last trees to turn color, often still holding tight to some foliage at Thanksgiving. Weather permitting, they'll ultimately be "raked" with the lawn mower and the residue blown into the

perennial border. Piles collecting in corners will be left to provide snugly winter napping nooks for the cats. By April, their fluffiness will have compacted into damp layers easily forked for disposal.

After tripping over a garden hoe and spade for the umpteenth time, I finally moved them from the basement porch to the storage shed. A short-handled, square-edged shovel got a reprieve from storage when I remembered how ideal a tool it is for snow removal.

Maybe if it's kept real handy, we won't need it too much.

Lawn chairs have been turned upside down for storage on the deck, except for a few at the little table where we enjoy lunch on sunny days. Several plants need to be lifted and potted, semi-hardy things which thrive in fall's warm days and cool nights, but which won't make it through the single-digit stuff. Warm, sunny days of recent weeks have kept any urgency about tackling them at bay, a procrastination I'll regret for sure some harsh,

raw, damp, finger-numbing day soon.

Lack of a hard, killing frost has only added to my ho-hum attitude about fall cleanup. My source for winter potting soil is still buried under a jungle-like tangle of orange and yellow nasturtiums. Vigorous, lingering weeds still obscure the row of de-funct gladioli whose bulbs must be lifted. And the dahlias defiantly push out blooms above partially-blackened foliage, discouraging my intentions to yank them for storage.

Our garden hose remains curling around the grass, because there are containers which still need watered regularly. The guinea's temporary wire shelter can't be removed yet, because they aren't totally conditioned to roost at a fox-proof spot at night.

In due time, the raking and storing and tidying-up will all get done. Mid-April, at the latest.

Or we'll have a big, early snow.

And then it won't matter anyway.

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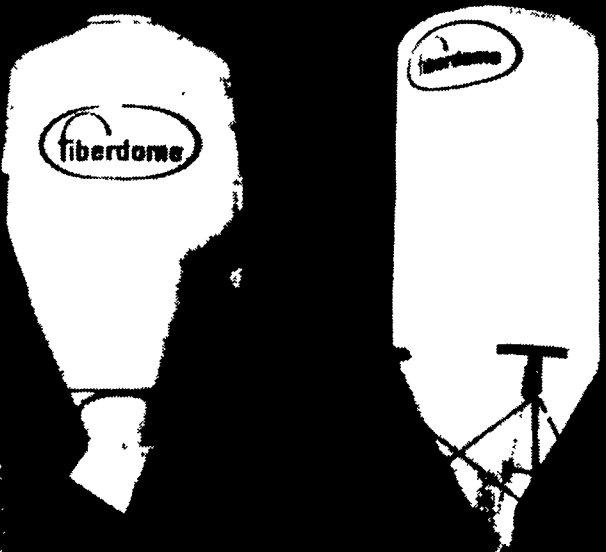
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