

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



It took awhile this year. Winter's cold hung around extra long. A good part of spring hid behind a summer-like drought. An early heat wave was followed by a misplaced Arctic cold front. Then, when it finally rained, the damp, dreary, moisty and mildewy stuff dripped for days like a leaky pipe. (And this past week, sweatshirt nights in July. Go figure.)

Frankly, we were beginning to wonder if anything was going to amount to anything, cropwise.

Then, suddenly, like the national birthday fireworks which lit our skies this past week with sparkling explosions, plants around farms and gardens have blasted into lush growth.

And the returns that farmers and gardeners alike work so hard to achieve are beginning to rain down like the aftermath of those

colorful aerial displays. But way more useful. And tasty.

"Grandma, grandma! Squash!"

Before I could say the words "let's just pick the biggest ones," yellow summer squash were flying from the sprawling plants in the garden and into our garden basket. Only with some fast talking was I able to con our produce pickers into letting me keep a few of the yellow squash for our own lunch.

Of course, anytime kids are that eager to indulge in any vegetable — much less squash, of all things, we try to refrain from offering discouragement. So we moved on to discover the first zucchini large enough to accompany its bumpy-skinned yellow cousins into the saute pan.

It's the blossom end that was deformed, creating a pig-shaped

zuke with a fat, stubby tail. We decided the misshapen vegetable, only about half the usual zucchini size, was either the "zucchi" or the "ini" part, but weren't sure which. I found a twin to it a day later; sliced up and sauted with butter and seasonings. The interrupted growth may have resulted from the weather extremes, but it didn't affect the taste.

Mere yards from the squash colony, field corn finally decided to take the season seriously and get down to some real growth. A couple of inches of late June rain, plus several afternoons of sauna-like heat, were just what the corn needed, thank you very much. The Farmer barely managed to finish applying a booster application of nitrogen fertilizer on before the stretching corn plant had elbowed him out of the fields.

Neighbors have been working long hours combining barley and wheat, quickly baling up the straw, then immediately drilling soybeans into the fields for a second crop. Second-crop beans need a prompt summer shower to germinate and get out of the ground. A few tenths-of-inches of thunderstorm fallout within a day or two was pure serendipity. And The Farmer rejoiced because it helped rinse that liquid nitrogen down toward the corn's root zone.

Summer storms, which usually roll over the horizon right in the

## Fullington Joins American Dairy Staff

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Meghan Fullington of Brewerton, N.Y., has joined the staff of the American Dairy Association and Dairy Council, Inc. as corporate communications specialist.

Fullington will be responsible for coordinating the dairy princess program, assisting with various responsibilities relating to the board of directors, handling communications with farm-related publications, and writing and editing the ADADC newsletter Promotion Focus.

In the past, Fullington has been an active promoter of the

dairy industry. She took part in the dairy princess program as 1997-1998 Onondaga County Dairy Princess and went on to serve as the 1998-1999 New York State First Alternate Dairy Princess. She also enjoys promoting her family's Holsteins and Jerseys at shows throughout the northeast.

"The dairy industry is one of the oldest and strongest going," Fullington says. "To have this role in something that has been a part of my and my family's lives for so long gives me great satisfaction."

middle of late-afternoon milking, and labor, watching crops respond with favorable growth after timely rains is sheer pleasure...and part of why farmers farm.

While The Farmer ponders planting and harvest plans over lunch, I do eyeball inventory of the flower beds. What is starting to bloom, what is finished, what didn't, what should be moved, where the empty holes are, why weeds still are always twice as vigorous as anything else? And why the wild geese have suddenly decided the lower corner of the yard, at the first pond, is the place to spend every midday.

It's our own backyard entertainment center, thought-provoking, discussion-starting and, all natural.

No commercials, either.

After a somewhat rocky start to this crop season's weather, watching corn and hay and beans and small grains grow, day by day, is tremendously gratifying. Almost daily, we take lunch to the back porch, where we can enjoy for a few moments the response of growing things to moisture and long, sunny days. With the investment farmers have planted in the ground in seed, fertilizer, herbicide, equipment

and labor, watching crops respond with favorable growth after timely rains is sheer pleasure...and part of why farmers farm.

No commercials, either.

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