

Well, this is a vine mess we've gotten ourselves into.

"Gee, string bean volunteers, how neat," was my reaction to the plants at first glance.

Carefully, I began threading tips of the slender, fragile vines with their heart-shaped leaves on grass stalks and weed stems, aiming them up toward the lowest rung of the split-rail fence. Anything cultivated on this bank near the dairy barn must tolerate daily dustings from sawdust being dumped into the barn bedding cart, cats digging at their roots and the potential of being munched by stray cows or heifers.

That last possibility eliminates lots of botanical possibilities which could cause upsets — or worse — to the cows' four stomachs. (Multiply a stomachache times four and use your imagination.)

Two seasons ago, sugar snap peas were the choice. It was a "chancy" attempt, since cows love pea vines and one wandering, busybody bovine could have wiped out the entire stretch of vines on the fence. Summer turned droughty and sweltering; the sugar snaps withered away. Last year's attempt had to be something more heat-tolerant.

Climbing string beans fit the criteria, and the small row of white seeds popped up almost immediately. Abundant rains sent the vines climbing with purposeful enthusiasm. The resulting tangle drooped oodles of long, slender beans that were crisp and tasty. We picked beans, ate beans, froze beans, and shared extras.

After debating a rerun attempt at that success, a row of cutting sunflowers won out instead. Not only are they drought tolerant and bountiful with bright color and bouquets material, but maturing flower heads going to seed would attract the beautiful goldfinches which perch on the heads and snatch the seeds.

Soon after the sunflowers

began to send up sturdy stalks, the heart-leaved vines turned up. I guessed that a few of the string bean pods had been missed in picking, and gone to seed among the thick tangle of jungle-like growth. Lucky for us, that would mean delicious pole beans for a bonus, second season, with no extra effort.

Except one recent morning, I noticed that the bean vines bore stunning, deep-purple morning glories blossoms. Closer inspection showed that another vine nearby displayed a number of similar blooms in a bright pink.

In a major memory lapse (imagine that), I had forgotten the dozen or so morning glory seedlings planted weeks before at intervals under the fence. Because they resembled last year's beans, my jump to conclusion had been a leap in the wrong direction.

Since a planting of bush string beans in the garden has already given us plenty, and a second batch is setting buds, the fenceful of colorful early morning blooms a bunch more enjoyable anyway. Some have jumped the fence and are threading their way up through the sunflowers to join the finches while one aerial performer is headed up the electric transformer anchor cable.

Despite the dry, choking-humidity and heat of recent weeks (or maybe because of), a vine mess of other assorted volunteers threatens to overrun us. A random hill of pumpkin seeds on the same steep bank where the morning glories thrive has sent thick vines and broad leaves across a 15 by 15 foot-section of bank and lawn, covering everything under a thick canopy of scratchy leaves. We can spy at least a dozen fat, yellow, immature pumpkins hunkered down under the thick, green cover, a torturing tease to the grandkids who want to start picking pumpkins "right now!"

Volunteer grape vines thread through hosta plants in the back

Melons Are 'Simply Delicious' This Year

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The hot, dry weather experienced in many parts of the state this year should mean lots of extra sweet "Simply Delicious" Pennsylvania cantaloupes and watermelons this year. Melons prefer warm weather and dry conditions generally produce a sweeter tasting melon. The harvest is well under way and consumers can enjoy the delicious and juicy flavor of Pennsylvania melons fresh from a local farmers' market, roadside market or supermarket.

Pennsylvania producers annually grow about 1,000 acres of cantaloupes, which ranks the Keystone State as eighth in the production of cantaloupes, plus over 400 acres of watermelons. Many Pennsylvania growers plant their melons in black plastic mulch to increase soil temperature and conserve soil moisture, producing a better melon. These tasty and nutritious fruits should be available statewide through September.

The fruits Americans call cantaloupes should more correctly be called muskmelons. True cantaloupes originated in Europe and have a rough, warty surface

while muskmelons have a nettled rind. Muskmelons originated in the Near East and were enjoyed by the ancient Egyptians and Romans. The Romans introduced them to Europe and the Spanish brought them to America. Watermelons are thought to have originated in Africa.

Although some consumers have their own standards for choosing cantaloupes, there's no disputing some basic ripeness indicators. A good cantaloupe will have no trace of a stem and a pronounced cavity where the melon was pulled from the vine. These two characteristics indicate that the cantaloupe was harvested when it was fully mature, which is important because melons do not increase their sugar content after they have been harvested.

When buying cantaloupes, select melons that have a thick netting and a rich golden color underneath. They should also have a delicate aroma. A cantaloupe that is still firm can be stored uncut at room temperature to let the flesh become softer and juicier but, as mentioned above, it will not become sweeter.

Watermelons should have neither a very shiny or very dull

rind, but rather a waxy "bloom." They should be yellowish on the underside — not greenish-white. If they have stem, it should be brown and dry, not green. The traditional "thump" test, besides almost being an art, is not particularly accurate.

Melons can be enjoyed in variety of ways at any time of the day. Sliced, cantaloupe makes a delicious breakfast feature. Diced or balled, either cantaloupe or watermelon make a cool and nutritious addition to lunch or dinner as an appetizer or dessert. Cantaloupe and watermelon mixed with honeydew, blueberries, peaches and other fruits makes an absolutely wonderful summer fruit salad. Generally, cantaloupe should be served at room temperature or only slightly chilled to enjoy the full flavor while watermelon should be icy cold to get the best flavor.

The United States Department of Agriculture, in its Food Pyramid, recommends two to four servings a day of fruit. Each serving of cantaloupe contains only 35 calories and is a good source of vitamins A and C plus potassium. Watermelon has only 32 calories and is also a source of vitamins A and C.

yard, Virginia creeper inches higher and higher up the east side of our old brick house and gourd stalks entangle themselves into a host of sites. One 12-footer has snaked out of a planter on the front porch and is marching toward the back yard.

I'd like to introduce these vigorous vining volunteers to the far worse, thorn-infested, mile-a-minute creeping weeds which keep trying to blot out the perennial border. Trying to pull them is like fighting with a cat.

Maybe all these viney volunteers can be trained to go strangle each other and save me the has-

How Do You Freeze Beets?

For best results, freeze beets that are less than three inches in diameter. Larger beets tend to have an undesirable texture when frozen.

Cook beets until tender in the skins. Slip off skins. Slice, cube, or freeze whole.

You can freeze on trays and package after they are frozen or place convenient amounts in freezer bags or boxes.

Beets are a low acid food and must be pressure canned. If you do not have a pressure canner,

you can still can beets if you prepare pickled beets, which have a much higher acid from the vinegar in the pickling liquid.



Cowtown Rodeo

Cowtown, N.J.

"Cow Capital of the First Frontier"

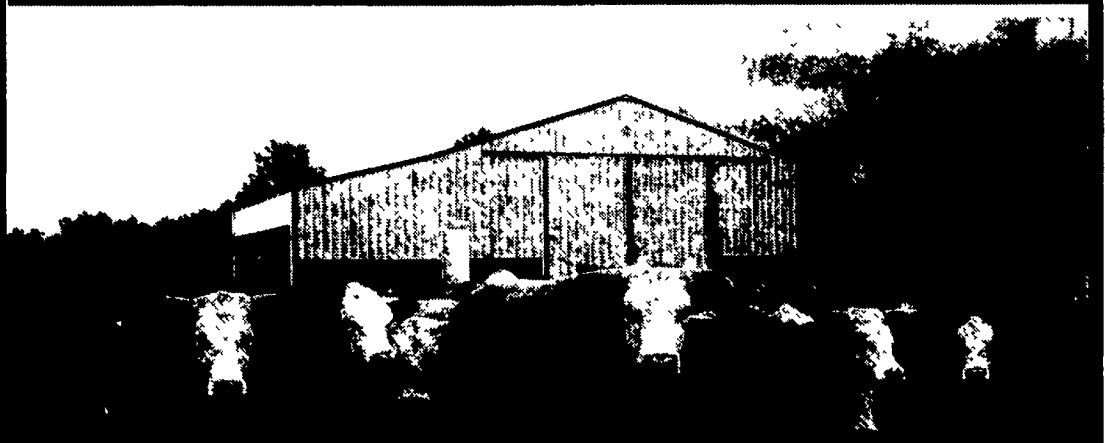


Located on U.S. Route 40, eight miles east of the Delaware Memorial Bridge in Salem County

MAY 26 THRU SEPTEMBER 29

Every Saturday Night ★ ★ 7:30 Rain or Shine
Admission \$10 Adults ★ ★ \$5 Children 12 and under
Free Parking ★ ★ Refreshment Stands
Group Rates Available: Call 856-769-3200

Security & Peace Of Mind



Livestock Facility Warranties

- ✓ 50-year protection against decay or insect attack on preservative treated columns and preservative treated lumber
- 10 year protection on the following:
 - ✓ Snow-load damage to structure with no weight limit
 - ✓ Red rust, including damage caused by atmospheric pollutants
 - ✓ Wind load damage to our optional Alumasteel® sliding doors (with no wind velocity limit)
 - ✓ Wind load damage to structure including hurricanes and tornados (with no wind velocity limit)
 - ✓ All warranties include materials and labor and are not prorated

Founded in 1903

Unique to the industry, all salespeople, office personnel, plant workers, engineers, estimators, architects and construction crews are employed directly by Morton Buildings, Inc. This protects the customer from the uncertainties of working with a dealership network. The customer has the distinct advantage of dealing direct with the company... no middle men



MORTON BUILDINGS

800-447-7436

Gettysburg, PA 717-624-3331
Mt. Pleasant, PA 724-542-7930
Phillipsburg, NJ 908-454-7900

P.O. Box 399, Morton, IL 61550 • www.mortonbuildings.com
©1999 Morton Buildings, Inc. • WV Contractor's License #WV007848