

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



The cows think it's April. At least that's what one dairy market report I recently read speculated, considering that milk production around the country seems to be picking up into a heavier-flow, springlike mode.

Four pairs of wild mallard ducks also seem to think it's later than the calendar says. They've moved onto the pond, ducking and diving and splashing with seemingly no care in the world. Given that they have a relatively open winter, open water, and open access to lots of stray bits of grain to pick and peck around the meadow, they really don't have a care in the world. Unless there's a late duck hunting season somewhere around the region.

About a dozen Canadian geese

began showing up about the same time the ducks descended. Usually they come honking in from the northeast along with the morning sunshine, to splash in a chilly bath. Likely some of the same geese hatched and raised on the pond, they generally stay only a short time. Apparently they have lots of meadows and lots of ponds to visit in their daily schedule books, probably checking out potential spring nesting sites.

A ladybug which just — while writing this — began mountain climbing the steep face of my computer screen, may also feel some springtime urgency. When she (or "he," since there must be some guy ladybugs) toppled off the slippery slope, absent of safety climbing ropes, I scooped her

up with a piece of paper and deposited her in a dish garden of houseplants to go date-searching.

The groundhogs, on the other hand, know doggone well it isn't April.

And despite their predictions, those furry little soybean-plant-eaters will snooze their days away underground, snuggled up in fur coats. Why climb out of bed when there's no greenery outside the door to chomp on for breakfast? Let the goofy two-legged types stand out on chilly, February mornings to celebrate rodent weather prognosticators.

Like the groundhogs, we await greenery and the feel of soft grass underfoot. But, we two-legged types haven't figured out how to curl up and snooze through winter's duration while still paying the heat and electric bills. So, we improvise.

"Mom, may I borrow some plants?" asked our daughter a week or two ago. "I really need to have something green and fresh around the house." A good portion of the mish-mosh of plants wintering in our little greenhouse came from their yard to begin with, so they'll just be going back home.

So, while The Farmer ponders soil-test recommendations and

plots computer field maps, I offer manure-tea and one-sided conversation to the greenhouse and windowsill residents, already responding to longer days and increasingly bright sunshine. Geraniums and impatiens have bloomed continuously in various shades of pink and red. Several clumps of dianthus add blossoms of fuchsia, white and variegated hues. A leggy petunia dangles a perky, purple bloom over the

edge of a hanging basket.

And weed seedlings are already poking up through the various plants.

But, too much warmth, too soon, for too long, will only bode bad for fruit trees, shrubs, and perennials. So, like so many tempting things, we long for it, even while we realize it's not in our best interest.

Go back to bed and check in with us in about six weeks.



The Lancaster County Department of Parks and Recreation will present an introduction to metal detectors entitled **Metal Detection 101**, on Wednesday, Feb. 6. The program will take place at 7 p.m. in the Environmental Center Barn located along Eshelman Mill Road.

Participants will learn how to go about purchasing equipment, methods of searching and locations available to detect. The program is free, however, individuals are asked to preregister by calling the Park office at (717) 299-8215.

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