


On Being a Farm Wife

(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



Gotcha!

That might be another name for April, a 30-day stretch in which Mother Nature is overcome with swings of raging hormones, throwing weather at us that ranges from benevolent-balmy to irresponsible-temper-tantrum.

Isn't it supposed to be March that comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb? Someone in the Greater World Weather Scheduling Department must have a computer glitch. (Maybe that's where our rainfall of the last two years got hung up.)

Usually, it's the very early daffodils that go down shivering through cold and wet, late-season snow. This year, the early daffs danced like ballet artists in a relatively benign breeze. But nearly every day I rescue a few more of the later ones as they keel over with battered stems trying to hide from relentless wind.

Gotcha!

In a burst of balmy-afternoon spring fever in late March, I tucked radish and spinach seeds into a little patch of rich, crumbly

topsoil at the base of a bank which catches the early sunshine. To discourage cats and the guinea trio from promptly scratching them out, a couple of those large, clear-plastic covers that come over bakery cakes went over the mini-patch. Strategically placed rocks on top served as anti-wind weights.

About two weeks passed before any green poked through, about the same time the sun really began warming in the lengthening days. Mid-mornings on my way in from the barn, I'll "flip my lids" to prevent baking the seedlings. Before long, a crowd of clouds will darken the sky. Next moment, there may be snow flurries drifting by the window.

It takes a quick trip back out to replace the plastic covers, but not until they've been retrieved after having blown halfway to the pond. This may be repeated a couple of times a day, and then again at night.

Gotcha!

The Farmer has been similarly confounded in his early-season field chores. Our relatively-warm

winter left many fields covered with incredibly lush growths of winter weeds, which will suck up every bit of precious crop moisture if given a chance. But each time the spray equipment is filled, it must be emptied promptly before the temperatures drop overnight to freezing. An spray rig full of ice cubes is not a preferred way to start the day.

Gotcha!

We crank and shove open all the doors and windows of the dairy barn, even turning on a few fans inside, on those bright, sunny afternoons when the wind naps and the air inside quickly heats. Within hours, the sun sails west, wakes the wind, and we go trucking around the barn cranking closed windows and yanking doors to shelter the cows from sudden gusts of snow dust.

Gotcha!

Even the berserk weather temperature of April doesn't confound nature's critters, who go about their daily lives seemingly impervious to the extremes. Our cheerful robins look fat and well-worm-fed despite the goofy weather and groundhogs are out, busying nibbling new grass.

And a dozen geese honk and squabble endlessly on the pond, chasing, splashing, flying, vying for territory. In ever-growing agitation, they circled and investigated the mid-pond nesting "is-

Get Your Garden Started

TOWANDA (Bradford Co.) — The Master Gardeners will present their first in a series of gardening classes on April 16, 6:30 p.m., in the County demonstration garden.

The first class "Get Your Garden Started" will feature short sections addressing planning and planting the garden, effective use of composting, using soil amendments, soil preparation, starter fertilizer for transplants, gardening with containers, and how to use newspapers to start beds.

Any gardeners are welcome to attend. The free classes are very

practical and designed to give home gardeners usable gardening tips.

The second class in the series will be held on May 21 and will feature plant propagation. Each month the Master Gardeners will teach one class in the garden on the third Tuesday of the month except for October which will be held on Saturday, October 19 at 9 a.m.

The Bradford County Master Gardener Program began in 1995 as a means to provide community gardening education and information to the public. Master Gardeners help the extension agents answer home gardening questions, diagnose plant problems, and teach gardening classes.

land" site, which had again worked loose from the plank moorings and such beneath the water surface. On a recent sunny morning, The Farmer took a few moments to balance in the canoe while he repaired the damage. Predictably, within moments, the sun disappeared, wind began to gust, and his fingers grew numb in the short time under icy water.

But a fat goose promptly climbed onto the nest site and staked her claim, with a self-satisfied shake of feathers over besting all other contenders in the quest for the yard-square, mid-pond real estate.

Gotcha!

The Bradford County Demonstration Garden began in the spring of 1996. The first beds that were started included the raised beds of vegetables, perennial border with a rock wall, annual garden and herb garden.

The Victorian Garden Shelter was added in 1999. Added since then are PA Gardener Selects plants, stone pathways, a compost center and members are currently designing and planting woody ornamental beds and a rock garden.

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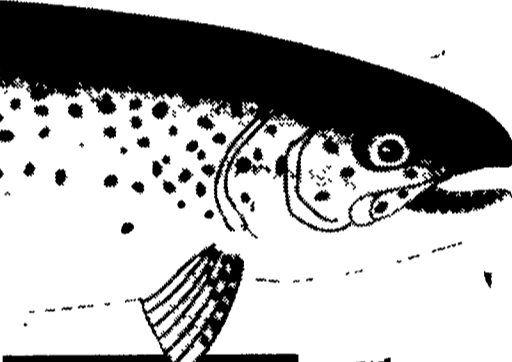
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—Joe Gordon, TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT, Johnstown

LOST STREAM MAP

The STREAM MAP OF PENNSYLVANIA was completed in 1965 after a thirty-year effort by Howard Higbee, a former Penn State Professor

The map is known as the LOST STREAM MAP to some anglers

Professor Higbee succeeded in creating a map of the highest detail possible—a map that shows every stream and lake. He painstakingly plotted by hand the location of 45,000 miles of streams onto a 3 by 5 foot map

The map sold extremely well—until it was lost several years later. Incredibly, the printer entrusted with the original drawing and printing plates declared bankruptcy, then carelessly hauled Higbee's 30 years of work to a landfill

The few remaining dog-eared copies became a prized fisherman's possession. Professor Higbee was offered \$400 for one of his last maps. And state agencies were forced to keep their copies under lock and key

Experts told Professor Higbee that reprints were impossible, because the maps were printed in non-photographic blue.

Then, in 1991, at the age of 91, Howard Higbee's dream came true. Computers made it possible to reprint the map.

Howard said, "I never thought I'd live to see this day."

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