

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



It was a sweet fragrance, yet subtle.

And the source was unknown. But something in the little meadow woodlot, perhaps a shrub or patch of wildflowers, was sending a wonderful scent through the early evening air. Maybe it had been there before, but was suddenly enhanced by the refreshing and long-absent scent of rain.

Rain. Real rain.

At last.

Two days worth of slow, soaking moisture had accumulated in the rain gauge on the barn fence, tallying some three inches received within a week. That as much as our crops have gotten all summer. While three inches is

not even close to recharging the severe depletion of our area's underground supplies, the soaking rain brought a tremendous boost to soil surfaces and, hopefully, a late cutting of alfalfa hay.

To say nothing of the improved mental outlook bestowed by steady rain after weeks of drought.

So, despite the continued slow drizzle, Derra Dog and I headed for the meadow, to bask in our newly-washed world, glistening with moisture and comfortably cool enough to warrant a sweat-shirt.

And the outside smelled soooo good.

Fresh mown hay lay in neat

rows across acres of hillside, sparse growth The Farmer had mowed down before the unexpected rain. His intent — and hopes — were that timely moisture would come to boost the fields for one last, decent, cutting of alfalfa. The hay scent, enhanced by the washing it had received, hung heavy in the evening air.

A musky aroma — ahh, damp woodlot soil, reminiscent of the mountains — added to the evening's blended perfume. Topping it off was that elusive floral sweetness, source still a mystery.

Visual evidence of the moisture enhanced the attraction of our freshly-rinsed world. Mud puddles dotted the field road, a tempting attraction to jump into with both feet, just to watch the splash. Not wanting to stroll on in squishy sneakers, I zigzagged through the myriad of mini-ponds of the dirt road, trying not to slip on the mud between them.

Though a bit murky, the small stream that splits the meadow was running higher than it had in months, gurgling over the rocky bottom as it vanished between overhangs of lush growth. Tall,

leggy wildflower clumps leaned over the banks under the weight of their drop-laden leaves. Birds flitted in and out of the thick, briary growth that shades much of the streambanks, haven for wildlife through all seasons.

Derra barely lifted her nose above the grass, totally immersed in her investigation of the myriad of smells along this path we had not walked for weeks. Evenings along the meadow creek during the during the sort of brutal heat we gasped through for endless weeks are less than pleasurable. Too many bugs.

Not to mention the large, temperamental bull then pastured with the heifers, a character who took his job as protector of his harem very seriously, to the point that he has since been sent off on his final career change.

Gone was the persistent, clinging dust that had coated every leaf, every limb, every stone along this walk, all cleansed and shining with freshness and moisture following hours of steady rain. Heading back toward the house, we took the standard summer evening path along the banks of the ponds. Droplets of

water artistically dotted the flat, round leaves of the waterlilies, their thick growth providing cover and safe haven for a half-dozen frogs that skittered away, chirping, at our approach.

From the open vantage point of the pond banks, the landscape changes wrought by few inches of rain were dramatic. In the fading light of a drizzly evening, the world was beginning to look lush, alive...green.

Grass was pushing tiny new spikes up from the faded clumps. Much of the sparse, mowed alfalfa had already disappeared into the stubble, the bare stems already sending out tiny clusters of new leaves. Even the zinnias in the border were responding with new spikes of pink flower buds.

Though the calendar page turned to September, outside it looked more like spring after a winter of drabness. Rejuvenated by the cooler temperatures and renewed growth, I mowed the lawn.

And planted a row of peas.

It doesn't take much rain to get a celebration going here.

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