

On Being a Farm Wife

(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



Quiet. Still. Serene. Peaceful. Picture those lovely wintry scenes we enjoy on holiday cards, calendars, picture books, magazine covers, pastoral settings draped in frosty white, yet washed with an aura of coziness. Rustic, rugged barns stand solid under roofs overhung with snow. Graceful pine boughs dip low under cottony drifts. Winter birds of cheery color gather in berry-laden, snow-dappled bushes. A golden glow shines from windows of an icicle-fringed farmhouse, wisps of smoke rising from its chimney.

Actual scenes of such wintry beauty have abounded this moisture-blessed season. But forget the quiet, serene, peaceful stillness. It's been one noisy winter. Frequent during recent weeks

has been the steady hiss of sleet and freezing rain bombarding the windows on the east side of the house. Drought-breakers they are, this parade of nor'easters that's been marching up the Atlantic coast. Such a storm stream is necessary and welcome, to break the back of our groundwater deficiency.

Following on the heels of the hiss of freezing moisture comes the sound belying the beauty of the outside. An unnerving chattering of ice-coated tree limbs reaches a clattering crescendo each time a wind blast bores through the trees.

And, we mentally steel ourselves for the dramatic sound bytes bound to follow — cracking, snapping, crashing — as limbs tumble from the treetops, to the

roofs of house and porch, the split rail fence, the lawn. The first storm tossed down a large one that just barely, barely, missed the farm truck parked in front of the house during the first of — we're losing count — the wintry ice storms

Professional tree-trimming of our giant maples done a year ago kept most of the fallout to relatively small pieces. So far, those have amazingly managed to miss the glass of the greenhouse.

This symphony of storm sounds inevitably turns into another harsh racket. The screaming whine of chain saws echoes around the back yard, as the piles of tree fallout are tackled and reduced to future firewood and songbird-sheltering brushpiles.

Another familiar sound byte of the season this year has been the roaring din of a diesel tractor cranked to high output, its PTO spinning the generator during several electric outages. Predictably, three of the four were over milking hours. The generator, a wood-stove in the house, fresh batteries in flashlights and lots of candles have kept the disruption to mostly inconvenience.

An ominous wintry sound effect marks not the storm, but the aftermath, as warm sunshine nudges at the snow cover. Swift and abrupt, a low rumble be-

comes a muffled whoooooosh, followed by a loud spattering sound, as the avalanche of snow cascades off our metal house roof. Our roof avalanches happen in a heartbeat; any unfortunate being caught standing below can rest assured they'll be found by spring thaw.

The roar of a big truck accompanied by a scraping sound marks the always-welcome sound of the township's salting/cindering/plowing passage. While farms are usually equipped to move snow around the buildings, and even the roads in emergencies, our township folks are prompt, efficient, and much appreciated for their dedication to our rural roads.

A happy sound echoed around

our hills on a recent, bright Sunday afternoon, with temperatures just warm enough to be enjoyable and cold enough to hold the snow. Three generations of us (including the dog) piled into the pickup, laden in snow clothes and sleds of various sorts.

The Farmer piloted the four-wheeler, for hauling little folks back up the long hill that slopes away from the conservation terrace. The lower side of the long curving terrace proved to be a perfect sled launch for a long, speedy sled ride — when we didn't fly crooked on those unsteerable plastic sleds and roll off in gales of glee.

Of all the wintry-storm-related sounds, the best one is the laughter of kids playing in the snow.

Time To Get Clutter Under Control

LEBANON (Lebanon Co.) — Getting rid of excess clutter can reduce housework by 40 percent. Fewer things to move and clean means there are fewer places for dust and its allergens to accumulate. This is important for everyone, but particularly if there's a family member who suffers from asthma.

Begin by analyzing what's in the room — one room at a time. Surface clutter is easier to deal with and will produce a quicker change, so concentrate on what you can see rather than what's

stored in closets and drawers. Things that don't pass the "I use it" or "I love it" test should be eliminated.

Don't keep duplicates or items that are broken or outdated.

Group the "keepers" together by category, so you can see everything you own at a glance. This will make it easier to determine where to store these items.

Discards generally fall into one of the following categories: trash, giveaways, tag sale, or belongs somewhere else (such as in storage or another room).

Give each category its own carton so it's easy to remove items to their next destination. Giving items away to a charity may make it easier to part with them. Off-site storage for items like tax records, college memorabilia or extra furniture is another solution. If you need something, you can always go get it.

When reorganizing, store items near their point of use. Books and reading glasses go next to the reading chair. Cooking utensils go in a drawer next to the cooktop. Keep accessibility and safety in mind. Don't store anything dangerously out of reach or overstuff drawers.

Once the reorganization is complete, follow the "One In, One Out" rule — nothing new comes in unless something old goes out. Make it a point to put things away as they are used.

That way, daily clean up should take no more than five minutes per room, and dusting and vacuuming will become easier and faster.

Longwood Gardens Symposium

KENNETT SQUARE (Chester Co.) — Longwood Gardens horticulture symposium will be Friday, Feb. 7.

Registration costs \$65 and includes admission to Longwood Gardens for the day, all lectures and demonstrations, lunch, refreshments, and access to a plant sale.

Advance registration is required. For a registration brochure, call (610) 388-1000, ext. 507 to receive a brochure by mail.



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