

On Being a Farm Wife

(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



Some art inspires awe, some art moves one to meditate, some art amuses, some art provokes discussion, like the giant butter-sculpture cow on display at the recent Pennsylvania Farm Show. Some art is unexplainable, like lots of the creations signed by Picasso.

And, there's art that's really cool.

Like ice sculpture. Now, there's an art form that causes folks to chill out.

Shaping ice into artistic forms can't be all that easy. It takes patience, proper tools, and some genuine training to learn the techniques to shape and shave it, while avoiding accidents which might cause the crystal-clear raw material to shatter and start melting in your socks.

Unless, of course, you are Mother Nature, sculpting ice art around here in the coldest January in years. And all the art supplies she needs are moisture, temperature changes and an interesting base from which to construct.

Windows in the dairy barn transformed to a sort of art gallery overnight early last week, as Mother Nature and her brush-wielding assistant Jack Frost swirled ice designs on the long rows of glass. Why do two windows, side by side, or above and below, facing the same directional exposure inside and out, freeze into vastly different patterns? That's always been a puzzle to me.

We're all familiar with the classic fringe of icicles that orna-

ments all sorts of outside places when moisture marries with freeze-n-thaw temperature swings. They add a whimsical "gingerbread" effect to houses, barns, sheds and fences.

But, occasionally the effect is more amusing. During a recent round of machine shed cleanup, an old truck was piled full of stuff to be disposed of, then parked along the edge of the road on an angle. Apparently, just enough moisture melted one day on the inside of the bumper to ooze to the lower-hanging edge and begin dripping off, growing a single, long icicle poking down from the edge of the bumper. The glittering icicle lends a snaggle-tooth effect to the old battered truck.

Admiring ice art sparkling in the morning sunshine one day last week, I spied a distinctly curved icicle. An artistic shape, it had formed on one of the numerous maple saplings that always manage to take root in the flower beds each year. This youngster was probably a 2-year-old, rooted under the overhang of the springhouse roof. Dried onto the dormant sapling were the remains of a morning glory volunteer which had curled its tendrils up and around the baby tree last summer.

As snow had melted off the springhouse roof, it dripped onto

the maple and its volunteer vine. The droplets had oozed along the curving shape of the dried plant tendrils, growing and shaping a thick icicle identical to the angles of the vine.

But our most stunning ice art is in the meadow, where a four-inch PVC pipe drains the runoff from one pond into the next one several feet lower. Bone dry for most of the last year, the pipe is now transferring gallons of water per minute, cascading out of the pipe in a drop of a couple feet to the pond surface.

Splashes and splatters from the pipe's waterfall have built up

over the last several weeks into a hollow, crystalline ice formation. About five inches across at the top, it widens to a foot or better in diameter at the bottom, resembling a misty-white bridal veil. Water still pours through within the shape, adding an element of life and movement to our smaller and frozen version of Bridal Veil Falls.

Despite this wickedly-frigid winter, warmth will ultimately convert the cool icy art to an alternate entertainment form even cooler to little kids.

Mud puddles.
Bring on the mud.

Roots Fest At Philadelphia Market



Reading Terminal Market produce merchants, from left, Jimmy Park, Vinny Iovino, and John Brown prepare for the American Roots Festival Feb. 1, from 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. Free festivities include cooking demonstrations, samplings, music, children's activities, and costumed vegetables. The market is located at 12th and Filbert Streets, Philadelphia. For more information, call (215) 922-2317.

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