

Gardener Seminars

GREENSBURG (Westmoreland Co.) — Register for horticulture seminars for the home gardener sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension, Westmoreland County Community College and The Greensburg Garden Center. Register directly with Westmoreland County Community College at (724) 925-4204 or (800) 262-2103.

- Tropical and Temperate Bulbs for Summer-time — Nationally known bulb expert Brent Heath will show how to use summer flowering bulbs, tubers, rhizomes, corms, and tuberous roots effectively to compliment and enhance summer blooming annuals and perennials in the complete flower garden. Class is Tuesday, March 25, 7 p.m.-9:15 p.m.

- Shade and Ornamental Trees for Your Landscape — With their flowers, summer and fall foliage, branch structure and bark, trees add beauty and structure to our landscapes and lawns all year round. Dr. Xuri Zhang will show you the many different trees, both native and introduced, that can perfectly fill that certain spot in your landscape while adding beauty and diversity. Class is Tuesday, April 1, 7 p.m.-9:15 p.m.

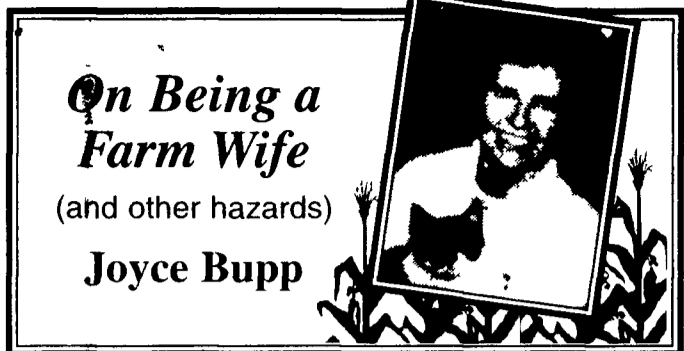
- Orchids for the Home — People mistakenly consider these exotic beauties hard to grow. Betty Davies will show you that, with a little attention to their needs, any gardener can grow these beautiful exotic flowers. Class is Tuesday, April 8, 7 p.m.-9:15 p.m.

- Bonsai — Who better to explain the fascinating and ancient Chinese art of bonsai than Dr. Xuri Zhang, horticulturist and native of China. Dr. Zhang will explain everything from plant selection to the fine art of pruning and training required to shape your specimen into a timeless work of art. Class is Tuesday, April 15, 7 p.m.-8 p.m.

- Chinese Gardens — Dr. Xuri Zhang will share the key elements of the Chinese Garden from design to installation and maintenance. Class is Tuesday, April 15, 8:15 p.m.-9:15 p.m.

- Building and Using the Hobby Greenhouse — Increase your gardening capabilities with a hobby greenhouse while avoiding the many expensive pitfalls. Rob Marshall shares his expertise to help the home gardener select and maintain a hobby greenhouse that will provide many years of pleasure. Class is Tuesday, April 22, 7 p.m.-9:15 p.m.

- Photographing Your Garden — Liz Ball will teach how to improve your gardening, as well as your photography, by looking at the garden through the lens of your camera. More a discussion of the art of taking photos than of photographic equipment, this talk is not just about photography but also about design and the beauty of the garden. Liz believes that taking good photographs of your garden not only is a satisfying creative experience, but that it makes you a better gardener. Her slides feature mistakes and how to correct them, illustrate basic principles of composition and focus, and celebrate flowering plants. Liz is a respected garden columnist and gardener from Philadelphia. She is author of The Pennsylvania Gardener's Guide and other books about gardening in Pennsylvania. Copies of her books will be available for purchase. Class is Tuesday, April 29, 7 p.m.-9:15 p.m.



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

Their smiling faces never fail to boost my spirits.

Some are old-fashioned smiles of purple features on cream-colored faces, others may be bluish-black grins beaming against sunshiny yellow. Newer versions of the smiles sport pastels of coral features against pale salmon, or contrasting shades of lavender.

Pansies — of all colors — are my favorite early spring flower.

One of my most cherished memories of my maternal grandparents is the garden-catalog-perfect bed of pansies they raised each spring during their retirement years. The faces of my grandparents will forever be entwined in my thoughts with the perky "personality" smiles of the pansies for which they had

especially-bountiful green thumbs.

But the life span of pansies is usually shortened by a spell of heat that inevitably blankets us somewhere from late May to early June, often just as they are at their most beautiful. So it was delightful when, in the last few years, pansies began to show up at garden centers in early fall, allowing us to enjoy them instead for months.

Thriving in moist, cool temperatures, pansies are a perfect flower for wintering in our barely-heated greenhouse. In fact, through the brutal winter we have just (hopefully) bid goodbye, they were among the few plants that remained a healthy and thriving green. With the encouragement of a little sunshine, they have burst into

cheerful blooms earning relocation to in-house places where their smiles can be more readily shared.

In the midst of enjoying the pansy outburst, I suddenly remembered one recent day that a batch of forcing bulbs were probably forcing their way out of their pots. Late last fall, The Farmer found them on sale during an equipment parts run and surprised me with the collection of daffodil and hyacinth potential.

Since it was then already late in the year, the bulbs were quickly tucked into pots, and packed into a couple of large cardboard boxes stuffed full with a thick, insulating cocoon of crispy-dry maple leaves. After chilling out for a couple of weeks on the basement porch, they got a hasty relocation to the ground cellar one night in December when temperatures headed for the bottom of the thermometer.

One bright morning last week, I lugged the boxes outside the ground cellar so the pots could begin slowly warming. In a few weeks, they should be ready to join the pansies in adding floral cheeriness to lingering chilly days.

As spikes of greening grass

begin poking through the dormant, dull, ice-crust outside of the past many month, we collectively embrace the signs of returning life and cheery color. Pussy willows have pushed out furry catkins and the graceful cascading limbs of weeping willows wear a golden cast of color. Buds of forsythia shrubs fatten and show early hints of the burst of yellow they will soon erupt into.

And a friend at church notes that her crocus have been blooming for days at a sheltered corner of their family's home.

If there was any doubt about the inevitable turn of the season, even with pansy smiles parked on the kitchen window, it was erased a few days ago. Parked outside the garage after an extended absence was our old, heavy-duty, faithful riding mower, fresh from the machine shop and a lengthy overhaul.

Could those pansy smiles really be knowing grins that lawn mowing season is about to start?

On the other hand, it's a better alternative than shoveling snow.

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