



AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

March/April 2005

Vol. 7, No. 3

SPRING IS FINALLY HERE!

With spring in the heartland, comes the sounds of planting and the sight of flowers beginning to bloom. Trees are turning green and gardens are being prepared for planting vegetables and flowers.

Do you ever buy plants/seeds/bulbs from mail order catalogs? Cindy Haynes, Extension Horticulture Specialist at ISU, suggests considering these questions:

✿ How do you know if a mail order nursery has quality plants?

✿ Will the plants be large enough to enjoy in your lifetime? (This applies to bigger plants such as trees.)

✿ Will the plants they describe (or show in beautiful color pictures) even live in the Midwest?

Answers:

www.extension.iastate.edu/newsrel/2004/jan04/jan0405.html

DENNIS AND MELINDA RODGERS ARE SURVIVORS!

On September 11, 2001—the day the World Trade Center was destroyed—Dennis was bitten by a brown recluse spider. He was bitten on Tuesday, saw the doctor on Wednesday, and—thanks to Melinda’s web surfing—discovered that leprosy drugs have

been effective in stopping the spread of the spider’s venom. Dennis’ doctor prescribed the drug. Dennis spent five days in the hospital and was released with a PIC IV, which he continued to wear for two more weeks at home. He survived!

The story does not end there. On an early morning in April of 2003, Dennis and Melinda were looking forward to a final day of work on rebuilding their home that had been almost destroyed by a fire. Melinda was working with the calving and Dennis was doing fieldwork when a neighbor called to say that Dennis was “down” on the ground. Melinda and the hired man rode to the field to find Dennis, semi-conscious and unable to speak. They called 911, not knowing what caused his condition. An RN with the Lacona Volunteer Fire Department Medics responded. He was able to administer an IV and oxygen while they waited for Life Flight to arrive. They airlifted Dennis to Mercy Hospital in Des Moines where Melinda’s daughter and Dennis’ brother met them.

An MRI determined that Dennis had had a massive stroke. The neurologist said there was not much hope for recovery. Tests revealed that Dennis’ blood pressure and cholesterol levels were normal, but he had a

AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

protein deficiency, a congenital condition both his mother and grandmother had, which causes his blood to thicken.

While Dennis was still in the emergency room, Melinda was approached by Dr. Jacoby to ask whether she wanted Dennis to participate in a study to see whether a new drug would repair stroke damage and prevent future strokes. Melinda agreed, “Absolutely!” Dennis was assigned to either a placebo or a test drug group – they still do not know which. Dennis stayed in Mercy Hospital for a week and then was transferred to Younkers Rehabilitation. Dennis continues to meet with Dr. Jacoby every six months to check progress.

Even though doctors had told them that Dennis would not get any better, Melinda’s younger daughter kept telling him, “You’ve got to get well! You have to walk me down the aisle!” Melinda also said that she could not imagine life without him. “He’s my best friend.”

When he started rehabilitation, Dennis was not able to do anything for himself. He had therapy five days a week for three months. While there, Dennis set a goal of being able to ride the combine. As Melinda says, “A farmer is a farmer no matter what.”

Dennis received a lot of support to help him work toward his goal of returning to farming. A very close friend at the Coop solicited donations to buy the hydraulic lift for the John Deere combine for Dennis. Tony Wernimont from Iowa AgrAbility helped get the lift installed on Dennis’ combine.

Once home, Dennis worked hard to regain his ability to care for himself, drive equipment, and work the farm again. He even succeeded in getting his driver’s license reinstated in August.

Later, the doctor told them that Dennis’ congenital condition was causing such an increase in his blood pressure that he needed to retire. Melinda also had had her own battle with thyroid cancer that had caused her to think about slowing down.

Retirement was such a momentous decision to make, since they had worked all their lives on a third generation farm, but Dennis and Melinda decided this was the right course of action and are currently in the process of making it happen. They have already rented their property, but have not yet decided when they will put it up for sale. It will be difficult for them to sell the farm to a stranger, since there are no family members who want to continue farming there. They had a farm auction on November 23, 2004 and sold all of their tiling business and most of the machinery, still with the intentions of farming in 2005. They sold the cattle—except for the two cows that Melinda cannot part with. They also have to find new homes for two farm dogs that cannot live in town.

As they are continuing with transition to retirement, Dennis and Melinda have realized that there is more to life than work. Now they “don’t sweat the small stuff” and they are “stopping to smell the roses” along the way.

As part of the process, Dennis and Melinda have purchased a travel trailer to use. Melinda will have time to do the things she enjoys like collecting cookie jars and clocks or rescuing treasures from a number of sources— garage sales, auctions, thrift stores, etc. Since Melinda likes to cook, Dennis will have more time to savor what she prepares. They will also have time to enjoy their six children, nine grandsons, and seven granddaughters.

Dennis and Melinda can be reached at Rodgersfarm@aol.com or 641-942-6370 if you would like to visit with them.

AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

LEARN STROKE SYMPTOMS

Stroke is a cardiovascular disease that causes: (1) sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, (2) sudden confusion, trouble speaking, or understanding, (3) sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes, (4) sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance, or coordination, and/or (5) sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Stroke causes the brain to start to die, but quick emergency medical assistance can limit the damage.

Stroke strikes 500,000 new people a year and 200,000 have recurring strokes.

Stroke has no age limits, even fetuses can have strokes.

Stroke is linked to high blood pressure, cigarette smoking, heart disease, diabetes, and small strokes called TIAs (Transient Ischemic Attacks) which last for a few minutes or a few hours.

LEARN TO RECOGNIZE A STROKE

BECAUSE TIME LOST IS BRAIN LOST.

CALL 911.

Source: American Stroke Association (a division of the American Heart Association): www.strokeassociation.org

MARCH IS BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH

Approximately 55,000 Iowans live with the disabilities created by brain injuries. That number increases by over 2,000 each year. Symptoms include mental, as well as physical changes, such as impaired memory and judgment. When a person has a brain injury, as with other disabilities, it affects the family also. The Iowa Family Support

Network, a subdivision of the Brain Injury Association of Iowa, provides volunteers who can respond within 24 hours from the time of referral. More:

www.biausa.org/Iowa/support.html

FAMILY FUN FEST 2005

The Family Fun Fest Advisory Committee and AgrAbility staff are working on the plans for this year's event. Please hold June 4 or June 11 on your calendar until the final date is set. If you have suggestions, please call (515.294.8522) or email (brndilee@iastate.edu).

SHERRY SAYS . . .

I will admit that I really love the mail order nursery catalogs, but I have noticed that everything looks different in the m than when I receive my order. I've also discovered that I can't grow any plants that require a lot of attention and precision in their care. I actually do best with varieties of cacti and succulents – most of which thrive on neglect.

I was given a cactus by one of my paternal great aunts. I had it for years before it decided to blossom and grow offspring. The blossoms were beautiful! The only problem was that they did not open until it was really dark so I stayed up until almost midnight to see the big beautiful flowers. Each successive bloom was a little less beautiful until they finally wilted.

Those little cacti grew on the big one until I started potting them and giving them away. Then the big cactus died. It looked as if it had been sucked dry by the little ones. Unfortunately, I had given all of the little cacti away (even some to a nursery) by the time the big one died and that was my greatest green thumb success.

AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

IOWA AGRABILITY - A joint effort of ISU Extension and the Rural Solutions Program of Easter Seals Iowa. The program can help farm family members with a disability stay in farming.

This newsletter from the Iowa AgrAbility Project will be sent monthly to AgrAbility families and other interested individuals. Please send comments and suggestions to:

Sherry Washburn, AgrAbility Program Specialist

96 LeBaron Hall, Ames, IA 50011

E-mail: brndilee@iastate.edu

Phone: 515-294-8522

ISU Answerline at 1-800-262-3804

Web site: www.extension.iastate.edu/agrability/

... and justice for all. The Iowa Cooperative Extension Service's programs and policies are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, and disability.

Iowa AgrAbility Project

Iowa State University
96 LeBaron Hall
Ames, IA 50011