

JULY 1, 1976

So many insecticides are being banned by the government, fly swatters may soon come under the National Firearms Act. Over in Mertzson, grasshoppers have increased under the new rulings until you see them shaded up under the trees. Mosquitoes and gnats are so popular that old women wear their bonnets backwards to protect their faces.

Sow bugs won't even hide in the flower beds. Last night I was dusting close to the house. While my back was turned about a two year old sow bug ate a hair sack of the approved powder. Nearest he came to getting hurt was sneezing from the talcum. Shelled bugs, you know, are like armadillos. Severe sneezing fits will crush their insides against their shells. I never saw a turtle sneeze, but I'm nearly sure it'd work the same way.

My gardens started off like it was going to be a major threat to the wholesale vegetable business of the entire gardening region of the southern part of the United States . I'd already priced a refrigerated truck to haul the produce. The pictures of the tomatoes on the seed packets made it look like the biggest problem I'd have was finding crates large enough to pack the fruit.

Fellow at the nursery must have got the tomato seeds mixed up with some kind of fruitless flowering plant. Blooms came in abundance, but I reaped more produce from a catclaw bush in the backyard that I have from the plants.

Leaf hoppers ate the brussel sprouts down to the ground before I could tell whether they sterile. I chopped off one for hydrophobia. Normal grasshoppers don't fight the town dogs off my property. The report came back negative I suppose indigestion from overeating was making him so mean.

Old time Number Six Disease killed the green pepper plants. Right after we'd harvested six peppers from 15 vines, the entire outfit shriveled and died. Good thing for sheep and cow people that we don't have that blight to fight. Unwilling motherhood is common to the rangelands. Few of our beasts, however, crumple over after having six offspring.

I cheated the corn worms by going direct. Always before, the worms ate the corn and the birds ate the worms. I broke that cycle by feeding the corn seed directly to the birds. Scattering seeds is easier than hoeing and irrigating by a wide shot. Farmers could leard a lot from us herders. Money blinds them. Eliminating the middleman is an ancient rule. Plenty of crop disasters could be avoided by pouring the seed in the river before the flood washed away the crops.

Vegetable farming in the Shortgrass Country takes extra thinking. On rare years that a crop is harvested comes the difficult decision whether to eat the product of save it for seed. Hard times come so often that a fellow is afraid to act. Friend of mine is a politician. His back fence is covered in green bean vines. He won't know until the November election whether to snap the beans or dry them in a sack.

Empty clouds and bad cow markets are a risky game, but an electorate can be as fickle as the editor of a lovelorn magazine for matching windows and bachelors. From the sound of the news from Washington, a bunch of the worthies had better have root cellars full of food. Much more of the scandals up there and the title "Ex- Congressman" may be more common than "Colonel" used to be in the South.

Ever one of my neighbors has a green thumb that'd make the label on a can of peas look like a third degree burn. In the evenings they walk around carrying paper sacks and arm baskets, plucking tomatoes and trimming tender lettuce leaves. The only thing I need paper sacks and baskets for is to haul off the dead leaves and the bug residue.

Seed companies and nurseries are going to miss my business next year. The hoe handle and hot sunshine addiction is easy to whip. Bugs and insects won the battle and the war. Bless the E.P.A. for returning me to my senses...