



WEEK MARCH 14 - 20, 1994

Celebrate Nature's Bounty

Supplement to the: **Berrien County Record**

Miniatures, giants can add interest to vegetable garden

EAST LANSING — If filling your freezer with produce to get you through next winter is your gardening goal, you probably aren't interested in dedicating valuable gardening space to novelty vegetables.

If, on the other hand, you have plenty of room, or if you garden primarily for fun, fresh air and exercise or if you're looking for a way to get the youngsters intrigued with gardening, giant and miniature varieties may be just what you're looking for.

To grow a giant vegetable, start with a giant variety, advises Mary McLellan, master gardener coordinator at Michigan State

University.

"For a record-setting pumpkin, choose Atlantic Giant, Big Moon, Big Max or Prizewinner," she suggests. "According to one seed catalog, Atlantic Giant set a world record at 827 pounds, and fruits in the 200- to 300-pound range aren't unusual. Prizewinner, a Burpee variety, routinely produces fruits that weigh 400 pounds or more."

For giant winter squash, look for Hungarian Mammoth or Mammoth King. These may also tip the scales at several hundred pounds.

The eating quality of giant vegetables is not usually on a par with their size, McLellan notes. If you

want a big squash that's also good to eat, try pink banana squash, which grow to be 3 feet long and 8 inches in diameter and weigh 50 to 60 pounds.

Other oversized vegetables featured in various seed catalogs include yardlong beans and giant white Oriental radishes, which reportedly stay crisp and mild at lengths up to 14 inches.

Though "giant" is fairly self-explanatory, "miniature" when applied to vegetables can have either of two meanings, either genetically small plants and produce, or baby vegetables — immature specimens of vegetables that would reach normal size if allowed to grow.

In the second sense, anyone can grow miniature vegetables simply by picking standard varieties while the edible parts are still small — summer

squash or cucumbers when they're 2 to 3 inches long, for instance, or carrots thinned from the row.

To grow vegetables that are very small when they mature, you must choose miniature varieties. These may be small fruits borne on small plants, or small fruits produced by normal-sized plants.

Miniature plants can help save garden space or make gardening in containers easier. Standard-sized plants that bear miniature fruits, on the other hand, translate into less produce for a given amount of space.

Another type of plant found in seed catalogs is the bush or dwarf variety that produces standard sized

fruits. These compact varieties of beans, peas, squash, melons and cucumbers take up less garden space but produce good yields of full-sized fruits.

True miniature varieties are available in many crops, including carrots, eggplant, muskmelon, pumpkin, summer squash, sweet corn and popcorn, tomatoes and watermelon.

"A careful reading of variety descriptions in a selection of seed catalogs will turn up both giants and miniatures," McLellan observes. "If they fit into your gardening goals and plans, they can be a lot of fun."

Slang is a language that rolls up its sleeves, spits on its hands and goes to work. —Carl Sandburg

Healthy Pigs Go To Market Sooner, Thanks To MMEW

(NAPS)—Why would a successful swine producer switch to a new production system requiring more work and money? Dan Carroll, co-owner of Carroll Farms in Carthage, Illinois, asked this very question.

Back in 1989, he decided to move to a new system known as Modified Medicated Early Weaning (MMEW). The program is designed to maximize herd health by breaking the cycle of disease long associated with conventional swine production. The switch was particularly risky for Carroll, who was already turning out high-health pigs. He has never regretted it. The results explain why.

"Take mortality rate for example," said Carroll. "At 6 percent our MMEW herd is nearly one percent lower than our already low conventionally weaned herd at 1.5 percent. We've put about 22,000 pigs through MMEW since 1989. At a market price of \$100 per head that alone adds up to a savings of \$22,000."

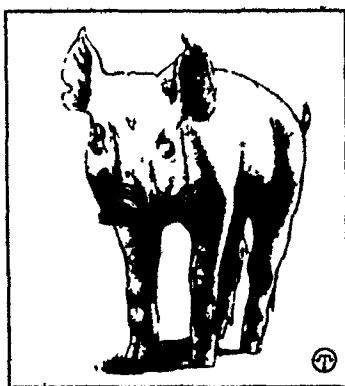
Focus On Sow-To-Pig Transmission

The program initially focuses on the farrowing, nursing and weaning phases. This is when disease is often spread.

Stress from farrowing routinely increases a sow's chance of contracting a number of bacterial and/or viral pathogens. A new environment, clipping of teeth and tails and castration all cause stress in newborns, making them more susceptible to whatever disease the sow may be carrying. MMEW disrupts sow-to-pig transmission of disease by medicating or vaccinating the sow and litter and by weaning early.

According to Dr. Dreyfus Froe, a Technical Services Veterinarian with Pfizer Animal Health, while medical treatment varies according to disease, most programs include a regimen of antibiotics. "Antibiotics can help prevent or eliminate infection associated with some of the most common swine diseases," said Dr. Froe. "Drug therapy with an antibiotic like oxytetracycline has proven effective against pneumonia and atrophic rhinitis."

By weaning pigs early, producers minimize their exposure to the sow's environment. This enables the pigs to enter the nursery clean.



No Socializing Between Age Groups

By definition, MMEW incorporates a multiple-site approach to swine production with each stage carried out at a separate facility. This allows producers to divide operations so that when disease is detected, all of production will not suffer.

Ideally, farrowing, nursing and finishing buildings should be two miles apart to prevent spread of water and airborne pathogens," said Dr. Joe Connor.

However, close proximity of farms can make this difficult in places like the Midwest. This situation makes preventing cross-contamination by workers and equipment even more important. In doing so, lack of distance can be overcome by adopting measures which truly isolate facilities."

Costs vs Benefits

What about the extra costs?

Managing an MMEW program and acquiring off-site facilities will increase labor and facility investment costs. Up-front costs and increased workloads, however, mask the long-term benefits.

"Switching to MMEW has not only decreased mortality rate, but improved feed efficiency and finish time," said Dan Carroll. "Productivity gains from selling the most healthy pigs far outweigh the costs."

For more information on MMEW and the successful prevention and treatment of swine disease, please contact your Pfizer representative or call 1-800-248-4385.

"Effective control of any swine disease is possible using MMEW," said Dr. Froe. "Assuming healthy pigs are the goal of every producer — and that disease control is foremost in their minds — can anyone not afford MMEW?"



DAY

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Be cautious with 'bug bombs': improper use hazardous

LANSING — Total release insecticide foggers, also known as "bug bombs," are effective in ridding homes of pests, but misuse can result in explosions or fire, according to Dr. Gordon E. Guyer, director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture.

"Bug bombs are a convenient and inexpensive way to control pests, but directions must be carefully followed to minimize danger," said Guyer. "This is especially important today since manufacturers have changed the contents of the foggers making them environmentally friendly but potentially flammable."

The foggers contain a pesticide

which is released into the atmosphere by aerosol propellants to fumigate an area. The propellants replaced chlorofluorocarbons, which were banned by the Environmental Protection Agency in the late 1980's. CFCs are not flammable.

Since the addition of aerosol propellants, mishaps have been reported throughout the nation. In Maine, a resident used 14 foggers in a 750-square foot apartment. The doors were blown out and the ceiling caved in. In an Indiana incident, a house was destroyed when the central air conditioning unit circulated the propellants into the basement where they were ignited by a pilot light.

"Most of the problems associated with bug bombs are caused by a failure to read or understand the product label," said Guyer. He offered the following consumer tips:

—Take care of reading the label and calculating the amount of pesticide needed for an area.

—Do not use more than is necessary.

—Turn off pilot lights before releasing the fogger.

—Turn off electrical appliances that create an electrical spark during an on/off cycle, such as a refrigerator, stove or dryer.

—Follow the instructions on the container regarding the health of family and pets.

—Do not re enter the home until the specified time has passed.

The EPA has recently required manufacturers of total release insecticide foggers to add

precautionary warnings about potential flammability to fogger packaging.

For further information about bug bombs, contact Michigan Department of Agriculture, Pesticide & Plant Pest Management Division, P.O. Box 30017, Lansing, MI 48909 or call 517-373-1087.

Farm Focus

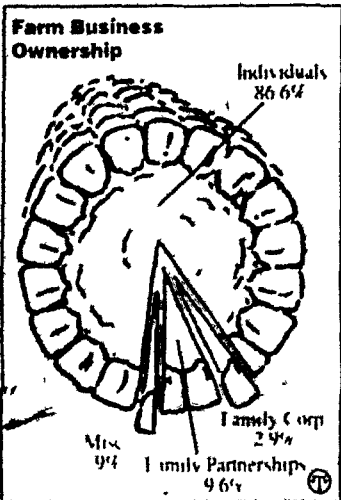
Who Owns The Land?

It still surprises many people, but big corporations from the big city don't own America's farms. Only 1 tenth of one percent of farms are owned by non-family corporations.

Farms, especially farms that grow crops, are overwhelmingly owned by individual and family-lam businesses in the United States. 86.6 percent of all U.S. farms are owned by individuals. The next largest farm ownership group is family partnerships with 9.6 percent. Family corporations with fewer than 10 stockholders own 2.9 percent of U.S. farms.

Families own 99.1 percent of the farms in the United States. All the other ownership types—non-family corporations, government units, non-profit groups and miscellaneous types own just 0.9 percent of U.S. farms.

And there is no visible trend away from individual family farm ownership in the United States. The trends that are visible include increasing numbers of small farms owned by families that earn most of their income off the farm, and an increase in the number of large family owned farms as more middle-sized family farms are bought



Graphic provided by Diers & Company

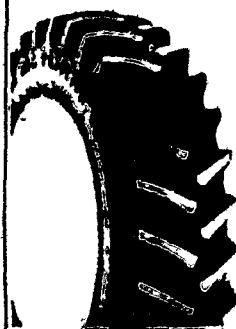
out by expanding family farms. However, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that the largest share of farm product sales (38.2 percent) is still produced by moderate-sized family owned farms that average about 1,200 acres, less than \$1 million in assets, and about \$50,000 in net farm income before family living expenses.

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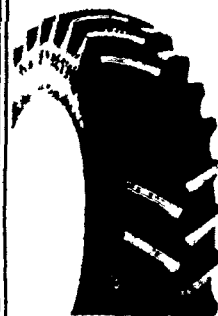


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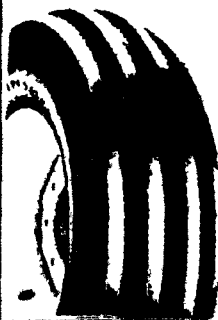
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Soybean foods shown to attack chronic diseases

More than 270 medical researchers, nutritionists, dieticians and food scientists from around the world gathered in Mesa, Arizona February 20-23, for the First International Symposium on the Role of Soy in Preventing and Treating Chronic Diseases. The symposium revealed research information that could go a long way in demonstrating soy foods' ability in preventing and treating cancer and heart disease.

The Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee sponsored two Michigan representatives' attendance at the meeting. The two are Karen Bremenstul, MPH, RD from MSU Extension office in Lansing who will be able to share soy information through the MSU Extension's network with county extension offices across the state of Michigan and Kathy Rhodes, Ph D., RD, with U of M Med Sport and Michigan Dietetic Association who will disseminate soy foods information

through these two channels and others.

"I think the symposium was very important because it brought researchers from all around the world together to share important information," said Karen Bremenstul. "Those of us attending the conference talked a lot about preventing diseases like cancer and heart disease and how soy food can play a major role in prevention treatment." Researchers feel that soy foods could hold key ingredients in the prevention of certain types of cancers. One of the ingredients is called genestien. Over 400 research studies have been done showing the positive effects of genestien in preventing cancer.

According to Kathy Rhodes, "Genestien is found in soybeans in its natural form. It can be produced synthetically but costs over \$1,000 a gram." At that price, it adding more soy foods to your diet

would be a more practical way to consume genestien. "However, it has been shown that heat can have a varying effect on isoflavones in soybeans, so it's important to use different types of soy foods in your diet," points out Rhodes.

Researchers at the conference indicated that soy foods could also

play an important role in treatment of heart disease. "The important point here is that soy foods may actually lower the amount of LDL (potentially dangerous cholesterol) already found in high amounts in a person's bloodstream," commented Rhodes. Researchers are continuing to search for more answers from

soybeans in the possible treatment of heart disease.

As more and more research is completed on soy foods and their relationship in preventing and treating chronic diseases, look for an increase in the amount of soy products you'll find on your grocery shelves.



Cold temps gone, but farm animals can still suffer

LANSING — Just because outdoor temperatures have increased doesn't mean farm animals are "out of the woods" said Dr. H. Michael Chaddock, state veterinarian and director of the Animal Industry Division, Michigan Department of Agriculture.

"This very cold winter has been particularly brutal for animals and some may not make it to spring," said Chaddock. "But special attention now can prevent tragedy later."

Chaddock said it isn't just frostbite and hypothermia that affect animals in winter months but starvation as well. He said, "The colder the air temperature the more food and water an animal needs to maintain body fat. The weight and general health of every farm animal and every household pet should be evaluated well before spring arrives, and measures taken if problems are detected."

He said most complaint calls to MDA about emaciated or dead animals occur between February and April. For many, it has taken a winter of inadequate nutrition for signs of starvation to appear.

Chaddock recommends that owners of livestock visually evaluate their condition and actually feel through the heavy winter hair or wool to assess fitness.

The most important thing an animal owner can do is provide fresh, clean water that is easily accessible. Without it, dehydration occurs, appetites decrease and the body cannot absorb nutrients. Chaddock said it is especially important to supply adequate water and nutrition to pregnant or lactating livestock.

Whenever cold temperatures occur, livestock should be protected—housed in a barn or outside but away from direct wind.

Any questions regarding animal health or nutrition should be directed to a local veterinarian or a county extension livestock agent.

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Extension answers all types of gardening questions

EAST LANSING — There's nothing like the threat of spring to bring out the gardening questions. Extension specialists at Michigan State University answer timely questions about flower gardening, roses, vegetable gardening, landscape ornamentals, problem insects and related topics.

Q. — What's the difference between annuals, biennials and perennials?

A. Annuals are herbaceous (non-woody) plants that flower, produce seed and die in one year. Biennials take two years to complete their life cycle. Perennials are hardy herbaceous plants — that is, their roots live for several to many years (hardy), but the tops die back to the ground each fall. Trees and shrubs live for many years, but they have woody parts that usually do not die to the ground each winter. Bulbs, corms and tubers live and grow for several to many years also, but they are usually considered separately from herbaceous perennials because of their specialized food storage methods.

Q. — What does it mean when a plant catalog says a plant is hardy to a particular zone?

A. — It means that that plant will survive average winter low temperatures in that area. Most of Michigan is in Zone 5. Plants hardy to Zone 5 or 4 are recommended for planting here. Plants hardy in zones farther south may survive a mild Michigan winter or a series of mild winters, or may survive with special care in a sheltered spot, but an average or severe winter is likely to kill them.

Q. — I'm finding some strange-looking hard-backed insects in and near some firewood stacked near my fireplace. Some of them have "feelers" as long or longer than their bodies; others have a metallic look. Are they anything to worry about?

A. — You've described some of the long-horned beetles and metallic wood-boring beetles that can come indoors on firewood. The warm temperatures inside the home accelerate the development of young insects or bring overwintering adults out of hibernation. Most of the insects that come indoors on firewood are strictly nuisance pests. They don't reproduce indoors or damage woodwork, structural timber or furnishings. Carpenter ants, powderpost beetles and termites may also come indoors on firewood, however, and these pests can damage materials indoors. The best way to avoid this possibility is to store firewood at some distance from the house and bring indoors only a few days' supply. As fires in the fireplace or woodstove become less frequent, bring inside only what you need for each fire. Any wood with tunnels or other signs of insect activity should be burned at once or taken back outside. Control any invaders with a flyswatter and/or a vacuum cleaner. Dispose of the vacuum bag promptly.

Q. — When is the best time to prune rose bushes?

A. — The best time is early spring, before new growth begins. Prune to remove all dead wood (live wood is green with white pith (the centers of stems) and has live buds beginning to

swell, dead or dying stems have brown centers). Cut one inch or so below dark-colored wood at a 45- to 60 degree angle about 1 inch above an outward-facing bud. Remove any branch or cane with no live buds. Then cut out all weak growth and any canes growing toward the center of the bush. Opening the center to light and air circulation will promote growth and quick drying of foliage, which will help reduce disease problems. Finally, shape the plant by cutting the remaining strong, healthy canes to a uniform height. 12 to 18 inches for vigorous hybrid tea plants, and 16 to 24 inches for less vigorous varieties and floribundas.

Q. — Last year for the first time I lost several pepper plants to what my neighbor said was probably cutworms. Within days of being transplanted into the garden, the pepper plants were clipped off at or just below the soil surface. They weren't eaten down from the top — rabbit damage I know all too well! Was it cutworms? If so, what can I do to protect my plants this year?

A. — Cutworms are certainly the prime suspect. These plump, hairless caterpillars hide in the soil during the day, coming out at night to feed on young plants. Though they most commonly hit tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, squash and cucumbers, beans, corn and other warm-season crops, they are general feeders that will also damage cabbage and the other cole crops, lettuce and other vegetables, as well as grass and weeds. This year when you set your transplants out, surround each one with a cylinder of light cardboard three to four inches wide. Make sure about one inch extends down into the soil around the plant. Unless a cutworm emerges from the soil inside the collar, it won't be able to damage collared plants.

Q. — What are the chances that a tree struck by lightning will survive?

A. — It's hard to tell. A tree that more or less blows up when lightning hits it is obviously not likely to recover. Sometimes a tree dies even when it shows little external damage, however. It depends on the severity of the shock to the root system.

Q. — I converted an area of lawn to vegetable garden last spring and had a lot of trouble with insects chewing the roots off my transplants. Is that likely to happen again this year?

A. — Wireworms, white grubs and other root-feeding insects usually eat grass roots. Convert an area of lawn to garden and they switch to vegetable or flower roots. They are less a problem in an established garden because it does not appeal to the adults as an egg-laying site. Your new garden is somewhere in between, so you may still have some problems with grubs that take more than one year to complete their larval development. Soil insects in general should be less numerous this year than last year, however.

Q. — I planted daffodils one fall some years ago, and they just seem to go on and on without any particular care. Is this typical of spring-flowering bulbs?

A. — Planted in a good site, many types of spring-flowering bulbs will

often flower year after year with minimal coddling. A light application of fertilizer at flowering time — one pound of 5-10-5 per 50 square feet — is recommended, however. Cutting faded flowers from bulbs is also a good idea — it diverts energy from producing seeds to preparing the bulb for next year's floral display. The foliage makes the food stored in the bulbs, however, so leave foliage in place until it dies back.

Q. — My lawn is dotted with mounds of soil that look like little volcanoes. My neighbor says they're caused by moles. I thought moles made little raised ridges in your yard.

A. — You're both right. The eastern mole burrows along about two inches below the soil surface, searching for grubs, worms and other invertebrates to eat and raising the winding ridges you're familiar with. The star-nosed mole burrows four to six inches below the surface. It has to do something with the soil it excavates, so every so often it opens a vertical shaft and pushes the soil to the surface. Star-nosed moles are more common in lawns near marshes, rivers or other moist, low-lying areas. Eastern moles are more likely to be found in upland areas. But one lawn can contain both.

Q. — What's a starter solution and why should I consider using it with my vegetable and flower transplants?

A. — A starter solution is a solution of fertilizer high in phosphorus (e.g., 10-55-10 analysis). Phosphorus is important to plant root growth, so using a starter solution gets plants off to a quick start and promotes development of a vigorous root system to support later top growth. If you can't find a specially formulated starter fertilizer you can use any complete garden fertilizer that will dissolve in water. Add one tablespoon to three gallons of water, stir well and apply one cup around the base of each plant.

Q. — What kind of caterpillar is it that makes those web nests in the crotches of trees in the spring? They get to be about 2 inches long, and they're black and hairy-looking with a light-colored stripe down the middle of the back.

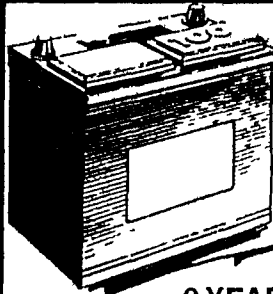
A. — This is the eastern tent caterpillar. It prefers small understory trees such as crabapple, wild cherry and apple, but it will also feed on peach, pear, plum, rose and hawthorn, among others. Its nests are often seen in roadside and fence-row trees in May and June. If tents are numerous and trees are small, the caterpillars can eat all the leaves in a short time. Trees that lose 60 percent or more of their leaves generally put out a new set of leaves. This taps the tree's energy stores. Repeated defoliation can weaken trees and make them more vulnerable to other insects and diseases that ordinarily wouldn't harm a healthy tree. Removing overwintering egg masses from valuable landscape or fruit trees, removing nests and caterpillars when they appear, and controlling caterpillars when they're small with *Bacillus thuringiensis* or a chemical pesticide labeled for eastern tent caterpillar on ornamentals are recommended control strategies. Egg and tent removal are particularly effective in small trees that can be

examined closely. These are also the trees likely to suffer defoliation extensive enough to affect tree vigor. Larger trees can tolerate more feeding damage.

Q. — I planted strawberries last year and am looking forward to my first harvest this spring. I understand frost protection can be very critical. When do I need to cover my plants?

A. — Strawberry plants can survive temperatures as low as 24 degrees F, but freezing temperatures will kill the flowers, so you'll need to

protect plants anytime frost or freezing temperatures are predicted. Commercial growers often sprinkle plants with water. As the water freezes, it releases heat that keeps blossoms from freezing down to temperatures around 22 degrees F. Home gardeners more often simply rake their winter mulch back over them. You can also cover them with newspapers, old sheets or plastic. Remove the covering the next morning when the sun comes up or the temperature reaches 34 degrees F.



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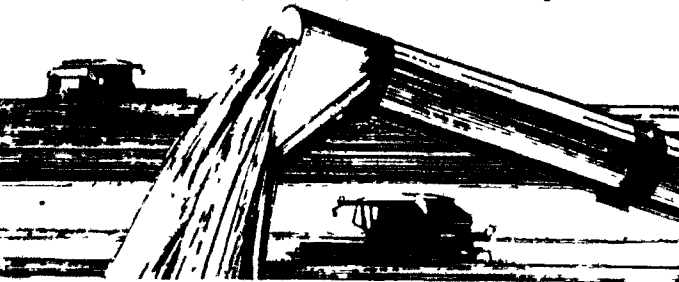
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Consider shade tolerance when choosing ornamentals

EAST LANSING — Shaded spots in the landscape can be a problem or an opportunity — a problem if you try to plant sun-loving plants there, or an opportunity to create a special grouping of shade-tolerant shrubs and ground covers that will thrive there.

Michigan State University Extension horticulturist Curt Peterson says a variety of shrubs, vines and ground covers are available for use in shady spots.

If the spot is shaded, narrow the list of possible plants by weeding out all that will not tolerate shade. Then make a final choice based on the plants' other characteristics: size, shape, texture, foliage and bark color, presence of flowers and fruits, potential pest problems and special needs in the growing site — moist soil, for instance, or acid soil.

For example, to convert a shaded expanse of poorly growing turfgrass — on the east side of the house in the shade thrown by several medium-sized trees — to shrubs and ground covers. Such shrubs as Japanese barberry and cranberry cotoneaster and such groundcover plants as blue rug juniper and creeping thyme can be ruled out because they lack shade tolerance. That leaves such ground cover plants as Hall's Japanese honeysuckle, periwinkle, Japanese spurge, English ivy and Longwood wintercreeper. Shade-tolerant shrubs include euonymus 'Emerald Gaiety', Weller boxwood, oakleaf hydrangeas, Oregon grapeholly, several rhododendron and azalea cultivars, and a selection of yews.

The available space rules out large shrubs such as upright Japanese yew and generally dry growing conditions means you'll probably need to water frequently or mulch extensively because most shrubs and ground covers that tolerate shade also tend to prefer moist soil. Exceptions include five-leaf aralia and Hall's honeysuckle.

Because the problem area is bound on all sides by house, sidewalk, patio and brick retaining wall, Hall's honeysuckle or English ivy could be planted, two vining groundcovers that readily invade lawns and other areas where they aren't wanted if they aren't contained. English ivy, you note, prefers moist soil.

"Once you've defined the general limitations of the site and narrowed the list of possible plants to those that will readily adapt, you can consider the ornamental traits of the various plants," Peterson says. "Through people often think first of such traits as flowers, foliage color and form, they're better off to plant a less spectacular plant that's well adapted to the growing conditions than some fancy, exotic species that will be lucky to survive. The common plant that's thriving will be the bigger asset to the landscape."

Assistance in selecting and planting landscape ornamentals is as close as the county MSU Extension office. Publications and videotapes are available on plant selection and care, plant problem diagnosis and other related topics. Look for an office under "county government" in a local telephone book.



Government Can Expect to Save With Options Pilot Farm Program

Could some of the burden of protecting America's farmers be shifted from the taxpayer to the options markets of the Chicago Board of Trade? The U.S. Department of Agriculture is conducting the Options Pilot Program (OPP) to find out if its traditional price support programs can be duplicated using options. If the more than 1,000 enrolled in the program are an indication, farmers want to find out, too.

"When Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy visited the CBOT in June, he was briefed on the results of the program sign-up and the trading which had occurred to date," said CBOT Chairman Patrick H. Arbor. "The initial data and, we feel, the bottom line will show that the government could actually save money through producer use of the pilot program."

The OPP was offered to corn producers in nine Midwest counties. Although wheat and soybean producers in three Illinois counties also were eligible, corn was the emphasis of this first phase of the OPP. With 20 million bushels of corn allotted coverage under the program, producers applied to enroll 22.8 million bushels.

Under conventional deficiency programs the government pays the farmer the difference between the target price and the market price if the market price is less. Producers can achieve the same protection by buying target price equivalent put options (the right to sell a futures contract equivalent to the target price).

To hedge their crops, producers were required to purchase \$2.90 December 1993 corn put options determined by the USDA to be equivalent to the target price of \$2.75 (plus \$.15 to account for the difference between futures and local cash prices). From March 1 - June 15, when OPP participants were required to purchase the put options, trading totaled 7,248 contracts.

Since each contract represents 5,000 bushels, the 20 million bushels of corn enrolled in the OPP would result in 8,000 trades if all options were purchased and offset. Considering the 860 contracts which had been opened but not offset as of June 15, it appears that virtually all of the producers who enrolled in the OPP followed through with their intended options transactions. Producers who participated in

the OPP were reimbursed by USDA for the cost of option premiums in lieu of receiving deficiency payments or marketing loans on the bushels enrolled. The settlement prices of the \$2.90 December 1993 put option during the March 1 through June 15 period ranged from 46.5 cents per bushel to 64.75 cents per bushel and averaged 53.5 cents per bushel. Compared with USDA's projected deficiency payment rate of 72 cents per bushel for corn for the 1993/94 crop year, USDA's costs on the bushels enrolled in the OPP were, on average, 19.5 cents per bushel less. Based on that comparison, the government can expect to save money by shifting some of the risk it bears for the farmer to the marketplace.

Arbor said, "I think the pilot program will show that in most years, the government's financial exposure can be limited. We anticipate more business in our agricultural markets as a result of the education of farmers about the pricing opportunities available in our markets. The market also can benefit from the additional information on farmers' selling intentions."

Whether the OPP actually saves the government money in the '93-'94 crop year won't be determined until the final deficiency payment is computed next March, based on the five-month national average cash market price. However, the initial results look promising. Arbor says the CBOT will press for the pilot program's expansion in 1994.

Market Matters is a monthly column provided by the Chicago Board of Trade, 141 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL 60604.

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'Convenience gardening' a hot trend for 1994?

EAST LANSING — An article in the December 1993 issue of American Demographics says convenience gardening is likely to be a hot marketing area in 1994. As examples of convenience gardening, it cited sales of bedding plants by mail order companies and planned gardens — planting diagrams and prepackaged sets of plants for various looks and needs.

"Buying plants by mail is nothing new," observes Mary McLellan, master gardener program coordinator at Michigan State University. "The gardener still has to decide which plants. Prepackaged gardens simplify the choices."

These already planned gardens will probably appeal most to gardening novices, she predicts, who may be overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of varieties available and the factors they need to consider when trying to combine them into a unified garden.

"If you're picking perennial flowers, for instance, you need to consider height, texture — coarse or fine — flowering period, flower color, need for sun or tolerance to some shade, need for moist soil or tolerance to drought, fertility requirements, best time to plant and so on," McLellan points out. "Even with lists of plants arranged by color, blooming time, shade tolerance and other traits, designing the garden can get very complicated."

Planting perennials is an aspect of convenience gardening that gardeners have already discovered, she notes. Perennials and some hardy bulbs come up dependably for years after planting. Combined with mulches to reduce the need for weeding, they reduce the amount of time and effort necessary to enjoy a flower garden.

"Perennials may be considered more of a convenience item than annuals, which have to be replanted every year, but what could be more convenient than instant flowers?"

McLellan says "Gardeners probably tend to take the availability of bedding plants for granted, but they make it possible to enjoy a wide variety of flowers that would be difficult to grow at home from seed."

Seed tapes — paper strips with flower or vegetable seeds at the proper planting spacing — are a convenience item, too. Even the lowly seed packet, however, is wonderfully convenient.

"The packet holds seeds of a particular variety, often an improved hybrid, ready to grow in your garden," McLellan points out. "Because it is a hybrid, however, you can't save seeds from one year to the next. Even if the packet contains an open-pollinated variety, you didn't have to grow it, harvest it, clean it, store it, and run the risk that it's infected with some disease."

"Chances are the packet also tells you what you need to grow the plant," she continues. "When and where and how deep to plant it, how far apart to space the seeds and the final plant spacing, how often to water, whether the plant needs full sun or will tolerate some shade — it's like a short course in how to grow that plant."

If you start looking through seed and plant catalogs, you'll find convenience on page after page. Wildflower seed mixtures formulated for various parts of the country or different growing conditions — moist shade vs. sunlit meadow, for instance; window sill herb gardens (just add water); collections of seeds for flower gardens of a certain color or vegetables for growing in containers; even bulbs for forcing that have already received their cold treatment — just pot, water and enjoy.

A few years ago, the latest in convenience gardening was computerized vegetable garden

plans. The gardener provided information on the size of his or her family, the size of the garden plot, its orientation and exposure, and desired crops and their projected use — whether for fresh eating and/or preserving. The computer program would then design a garden plan that indicated how many row feet, hills or individual plants of each crop would be needed to meet family needs for

each crop.

"Gardeners are always looking for ways to grow productive, attractive gardens with less work," McLellan observes. "They may choose to spend their time gardening, but they will take advantage of ways to reduce the amount of hard work involved. Less time working in the garden means more time to sit back and

enjoy it. Maybe that's what convenience gardening is all about."

MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU Quick Facts

Farmers here in Michigan boosted production of cantaloupes last year by 55 percent. But output of onions, carrots and celery went down.

Health officials around Miami are asking for over \$3 million to fund an extensive anti-rat campaign. The disease-carrying rodents have flourished in the wreckage left from Hurricane Andrew. Meanwhile, the state of Florida has spent \$65 million

over the last 15 years to preserve the endangered Key Largo wood rat.

Researchers at Ohio State University say a decline in U.S. wild honey bee populations has increased the need for domesticated bees to help Midwest fruit and vegetable production. The drop in the number of wild bees is due partly to an infestation of parasites that attack bees in their hives.

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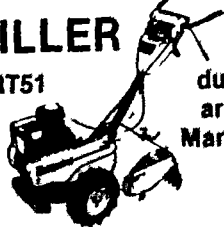
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Even informal garden needs planning, design

EAST LANSING — A highly formal garden, with its straight lines and symmetry and geometric shapes, obviously must be very carefully planned and designed.

An informal planting may need just as much planning, however, so that it becomes an attractive, integral part of the landscape.

Mary McLellan, Master Gardener coordinator at Michigan State University, suggests that gardeners plan their flower beds long before they go to the garden center to pick out plants.

"Seed catalogs can be a big help, even if you intend to buy bedding plants," she observes. "You can use the descriptions of various types and varieties to choose those that will grow to the size you want, produce flowers in the colors you want and bloom at different times so you always have something in flower."

A handy guide to designing, planting and caring for an annual flower garden is extension bulletin NCR 399, "Growing and Using Annuals and Bulbs." It is filled with how-to information and charts listing

dozens of varieties, their flower color, height, proper spacing between plants, light requirements, and notes on cultural requirements, special attributes, major pests, etc.

It also lists annuals for hot, dry spots, shady locations, edging, cut flowers, hanging baskets and other special uses.

Which annuals you can plant outdoors before the danger of frost is past, how to start seed indoors, and how to prepare the garden beds for seeds or transplants are also covered, along with watering, fertilizing,

controlling weeds, and identifying common insect and disease problems.

The second part of the bulletin gives similar information on hardy and tender bulbs for Michigan gardens.

You can obtain NCR 399, "Growing and Using Annuals and Bulbs," from your county MSU extension office or directly from the MSU bulletin office, 10-B Agriculture Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824-1039. Other gardening publications and videos are also available.



Potatoes, sweet potatoes, dry onions, hard rind squashes, eggplant and rutabaga keep better in a cool place such as a basement, than in a cold one, such as the refrigerator.

MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU Quick Facts

Fairly normal plantings and relatively good growing weather in Florida and California are combining to create a good winter vegetable supply and favorable winter vegetable prices. Broccoli and iceberg lettuce should be two of the best vegetable bargains.

Researchers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture are studying the diets of women to determine the main contributors of carotenoids. Carotenoids are a group of nearly 600 yellow, orange and red pigments that give foods like carrots and tomatoes their distinctive color. The study is an attempt to assess the anti cancer value of carotenoids.

The largest single expense on fruit, vegetable and horticultural specialty farms is labor. As labor costs rise, mechanization becomes a more feasible option for farmers, but some fragile crops depend on the human touch.

Building materials made with corn starch turn out to be more than insect pests can chew. Scientists found that polyurethane foam made with ten percent corn starch is cheaper to produce. And they've now determined, to their relief, that the corn starch foam holds no special attraction to insects.

A study at Penn State University

found that iron from food sources like meat has more value to the body than iron from vitamin supplements. Lean meat apparently enhances iron absorption in the body.

American beekeepers operate more than three million honey bee colonies. Ninety percent of all beekeepers are hobbyists with fewer than 25 colonies. Honey bees are vital to U.S. agriculture, contributing an estimated \$10 billion each year in pollination services, much of it free in return for honey.

Environmentally-friendly soybean-based ink is increasingly popular in the nation's printing business. Several major newspapers, including the Detroit Free Press and Los Angeles Times use soybean ink. Printers say the ink is cheaper than its petroleum based alternative, flows better and provides sharper colors.

Genetic maps produced by U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists can help develop animals resistant to certain diseases and bacteria. Ultimately that will mean an even higher quality, safer and healthier food supply for consumers.

Michigan farmers produced 90,000 tons of spearmint last year. Spearmint oil is widely used in chewing gum and for flavoring food products.



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Flowering annuals brighten shady spots

EAST LANSING — Light shade or a northern exposure doesn't mean homeowners can't grow flowers. They simply need to choose species that do well without full sun.

Lowell Ewart, Michigan State University horticulturist, says a variety of popular annuals not only survive but thrive in shady spots in the garden. Impatiens, wax begonia and coleus are good choices for a garden that's shaded all or most of the day. Wax begonia, impatiens, sweet alyssum, salvia and nicotiana are well suited to areas that receive some sun during the day.

A favorite for hanging baskets in shady spots is fuchsia.

Another option for a shady spot is tuberous begonias. Tubers are started indoors in early spring, transplanted after the danger of frost is past and taken up again in the fall. The plants bear spectacular single and double flowers in shades of yellow, red, pink and coral, as well as white, throughout the summer.

Annuals such as impatiens and wax begonia are set in the garden as transplants after the danger of spring frost is past, and they flower until killed by frost in the fall.

Impatiens is probably the most popular annual for shade. It forms low, flower-covered mounds as the summer passes. Flowers range in size from 1 to 2 inches in diameter and come in a rainbow of colors, from white through pink and lavender to coral, salmon and red. Bicolors and double and semidouble flowers are among the more recent introductions.

Coleus is grown for its brightly colored, exotic-looking foliage rather than for its insignificant flowers. In fact, the lavender flower spikes should be pinched off before the flowers open to keep plants from going to seed and declining. Because coleus foliage comes in a range of colors, from creamy yellow to rosy pink, shades of green, dark red and nearly black, a mass of a single variety gives a better visual effect than a mixture of colors and leaf types. Leaves may be fringed, notched, lacy or wrinkled.

Salvia and nicotiana are usually considered full-sun annuals, but they will grow nicely in an area that is shaded part of the day. The traditional color for salvia is bright red, but more recent introductions produce spikes of blue-violet, ivory, orange, rose and blue flowers. The trumpet-shaped flowers of nicotiana may be pink, red, white or yellow, and their fragrance perfumes the garden in the evening.

Sweet alyssum, too, is usually planted in full sun, but it will do well in partial sun, too. In fact, it is less heat tolerant than many other sun-loving annuals, so a spot that's shaded in the late afternoon might be preferred. These plants form low mounds covered with tiny white, pink or purple flowers. They're most often used for edging in front of taller plantings.

Quite often, the limiting factor in shade-grown annuals is not light but water — nearby tree roots take up available water, leaving shallow-rooted annuals high and dry. Ewart recommends mulching to retain soil moisture and applying an inch of

water per week during dry periods.

"Many of these shade-tolerant annuals will also do well in containers," he notes. "Fuchsia is very popular as a hanging basket plant, and pendulous tuberous begonias were developed just for

container culture. Impatiens can be very attractive in large containers such as half-barrels."

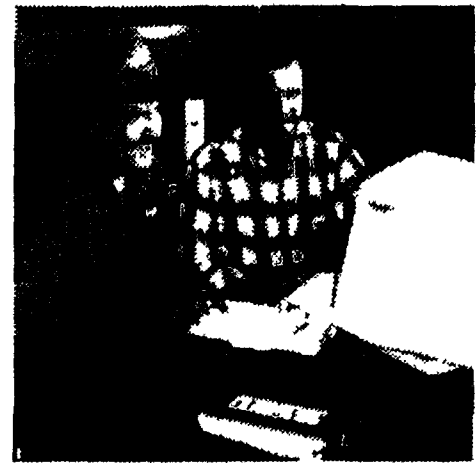
At Michigan State University, plants that are usually considered shade-tolerant are often grown in full sun. The secret, Ewart says, is (Please turn to page 11)



Bernetta Bowling of Edward D. Jones & Co., 404 E. Main St. in Niles is pictured giving a daily closing stock report at 5:15 p.m. on WNIL. She is pictured with BJ Cole, who says anyone with investment questions can call him at 684-8282 for all the answers. (Photo by Jane Peterson)



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Sunny garden can be home to dozens of flowering annuals

EAST LANSING — So many flowering annuals thrive in full sun that the hardest part about planting a flower garden in a sunny spot may be deciding what to plant.

"Your choices are limited only by your preferences for color, size and flowering time," says Lowell Ewart, Michigan State University horticulture specialist.

Sun-loving annuals usually set in the garden as transplants include petunias, geraniums, alyssum and portulaca (moss rose). Transplants of these flowering annuals give virtually instant color. Marigolds, zinnias, sweet peas, nasturtiums, four o'clocks, sunflowers and cosmos are among those usually grown from seed sown directly into the garden. Sowing seed requires a little more patience, but these popular annuals are quick and easy from seed.

Petunias are roughly divided into grandifloras, double and single, and multifloras. Grandifloras have larger flowers and come in a variety of colors. Multifloras are prolific bloomers, bearing smaller flowers but more of them. Multifloras have historically been more disease resistant and better able to withstand wet or humid weather. All petunias benefit from a midseason shearing to remove straggly stems and promote a new flush of blooms.

The newer geraniums offer a wide range of colors, from white through pink, salmon and coral to the traditional reds, as well as bicolors. Seed-grown hybrids set in the garden in May should continue to grow and flower until killed by frost in the fall.

Alyssum is a short plant usually used for borders. Though it can be grown from seed started indoors, it's usually set into the garden as transplants in May. Plants become low mounds covered with tiny purple, pink or white flowers. Though it prefers full sun, alyssum is not as tolerant of high temperatures as some other annuals.

Portulaca is a low growing plant with succulent stems that bears single roselike flowers in a wide variety of colors. It makes an excellent flowering ground cover for hot, dry sites, including rock gardens, windowboxes and sunny borders, where it spreads and fills in rapidly.

Marigolds and zinnias are available in a wide range of plant and flower sizes. Zinnias offer a greater range of flower colors, from pure white through yellow, orange, pink, coral and red to various bicolors. Marigolds are generally yellow, orange and brick red.

Marigolds are among the quickest annuals to flower from seed sown in the garden — some varieties take as little as five to six weeks. They're also widely available as transplants.

Zinnias are so quick and dependable from seed that there's little reason to transplant them. Such a variety of plant sizes is available that there's a zinnia for almost any use, from beds and borders to cut flowers. The main requirement for success with zinnias is full sun. In partial shade or locations with poor air circulation — which can be caused by planting too thickly — zinnia foliage is slow to dry after dew, rain

or irrigation, and tends to develop powdery mildew and alternaria.

Sweet peas, like garden peas, can be planted outdoors as soon as the soil is dry enough to work. Both climbing and bush-type plants are available. The fragrant flowers may be white or shades of pink, rose, lavender or red. Look for varieties with good heat resistance — they'll

last longer into the summer.

Nasturtiums are available in bush, climbing and trailing varieties for full sun areas with poor soil, windowboxes, containers and rock walls. The long-stemmed flowers may be yellow, orange or scarlet. Overfertilization or too-rich soil produces lush plants with few flowers. A bonus with nasturtiums is

that both flowers and leaves are edible. The fact that their trumpet-shaped blossoms generally open about 4

Four o'clocks get their name from

(Please turn to page 22)



Tom Bowlin is now the president of Suburban Homes of Niles, Inc. after serving as manager for four years. Located at 2015 S. 11th St. in Niles, the business is open Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-7 p.m., and Friday-Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. For more details, call 683-3212. (Photo by Jane Peterson)

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Create Portable Gardens

Container gardening continues to gain popularity for many reasons. Container gardens are portable, providing year-round color and continual redesigning options. They also work well in small spaces. But there are some tricks to container gardening.

Get started by analyzing your available space. What kind of sunlight and moisture will plants get there? For example, if it's shady, you'll need to choose plants that will thrive in those conditions—like impatiens or hostas. Use both annuals and perennials. Potted annuals arranged in a bed introduce variety and provide nearly continuous color. Or try dwarf orange trees or miniature roses, both of which can be brought indoors when cold weather hits.

The containers you use make a difference. Certain plant varieties, such as cacti, require shallow, porous and breathable containers like terra cotta. Others like moisture conditions and prefer ceramic or plastic pots, which tend to hold water. The size of the pot also matters; for instance, roses need pots two times the size of the root ball.

Make sure your containers have existing drainage holes or drill your own using a ceramic drill bit.

Healthy, well-balanced soil is critical to successful container gardening. Potting mixes that contain Canadian sphagnum peat moss are the best bet. Sphagnum peat moss is a natural, sustainable resource that retains moisture (nearly 20 times its weight in water) and nutrients to promote deep root growth.

Before planting, place pieces of wire mesh or broken pottery over your containers' drainage holes to keep the soil from washing away with every watering. Put enough soil in the bottom so when you place the plant inside (after gently loosening the roots with your hand), the top of the root ball is even with the lip of the pot. Fill in with soil and lightly tamp it down. Water drain and add more soil if necessary.

For more tips, send a self-addressed business size envelope with 52 cents postage to *The Secret of Great Gardening: The Soil*, CSPNA, Dept. ML, 8400 Normandale Lake Blvd., #500, Minneapolis, MN 55437.



THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT for successful container gardening is a healthy, well-balanced potting soil mixture containing Canadian sphagnum peat moss. Peat retains moisture and nutrients and protects soil from hardening, promoting healthy root growth.



The staff at Strieter's in New Carlisle, Ind., can help you choose the right product for your lawn. The business offers a wide selection of lawn mowers, tillers, garden tractors, trailers and implements.

Some flowers do well in shade

(Continued from page 9) keeping the roots cool by using plenty of mulch.

"It's not direct sunlight per se that's the problem with these plants—it's that they can't tolerate heat on their roots," he explains. "If you keep the roots cool and moist with

mulch and regular watering, they'll do fine out in the sun."

A spot that gets morning sun and afternoon shade is better for these shade-tolerant plants than a location that's shaded in the morning but subjected to late afternoon and evening sun. Especially on the south

or west side of a fence or building, the afternoon sun can be very harsh and the heat buildup intense. In a northern exposure, on the other hand, where plants receive no direct sun but plenty of bright, indirect light, these shade-tolerant plants will thrive.

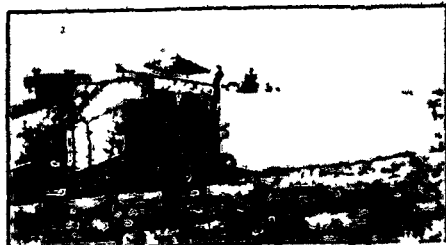


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Keep trees healthy by following these easy tips

EAST LANSING — Healthy trees add to the attractiveness and increase the value of the landscape. To keep trees healthy, follow these tips from Michigan State University horticulturists:

—Plant hardy species in sites that provide the growing conditions they need and room for them to reach their mature size. Trees will be healthier and need less maintenance if they're well suited to the light, moisture, drainage and soil in the planting site, and if they're dependably winter hardy.

—Plant trees properly. Remove all non-biodegradable materials from the root ball at planting time. Dig a planting hole big enough to accommodate the roots. Backfill the hole, water to settle the soil, and finish replacing the soil.

Mulch to conserve soil moisture, and support trees with stakes or guy wires to prevent wind whipping. Shield against harsh winter wind and sun as needed.

—Water newly planted trees

during dry weather. Avoid fertilizing until the next year after planting.

—Protect trees against injury by lawn mowers, weed trimmers, and other lawn and garden equipment. Mulching keeps mowers and trimmers at a distance.

—Choose and use lawn and garden chemicals — especially herbicides (weed killers) — with care to avoid injuring trees and shrubs.

—Avoid using deicing salt around landscape plants as much as possible.

—Remove broken, diseased or dead branches promptly and properly so they don't provide insects or disease organisms an entryway into healthy wood. Pruning out dead branches can also prevent injury or damage by branches that break and fall in a wind or ice storm.

—Choose species or cultivars with few or no serious disease and insect problems. When problems occur in valuable plants, treat them promptly and properly. Remove problem-prone low-value plants and replace them with superior species or

cultivars.

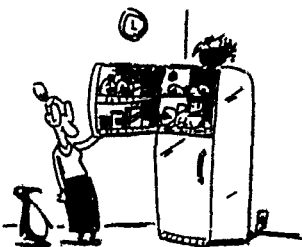
—Protect trees during construction. Prevent wounds and soil compaction around trees by erecting fences to keep heavy

equipment at a distance. Avoid changing the grade around landscape trees — piling even a few inches of soil over a tree's roots or exposing parts of the root system can kill

sensitive trees such as beech. If necessary, build a well around a tree rather than pile soil around it, or a wall to maintain the soil around the roots if the grade must be lowered.

HOW LONG TO FREEZE AT 0°F...

Food quality—that is, its texture and flavor—may diminish gradually over time. To avoid this problem, store foods in the freezer no longer than what's advised by the USDA and by food scientists:



Parts.....9 months
Giblets.....3 to 4 months
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Duck.....6 months

PORK
Roast.....4 to 6 months*
Sausage.....1 month
Chops.....3 to 6 months
Ham.....6 months**

BEEF
Roast or steak.....6 to 12 months*

Ground beef.....3 to 4 months
Cooked meats, meat dishes, beef broth.....2 to 3 months

FRUITS.....12 months

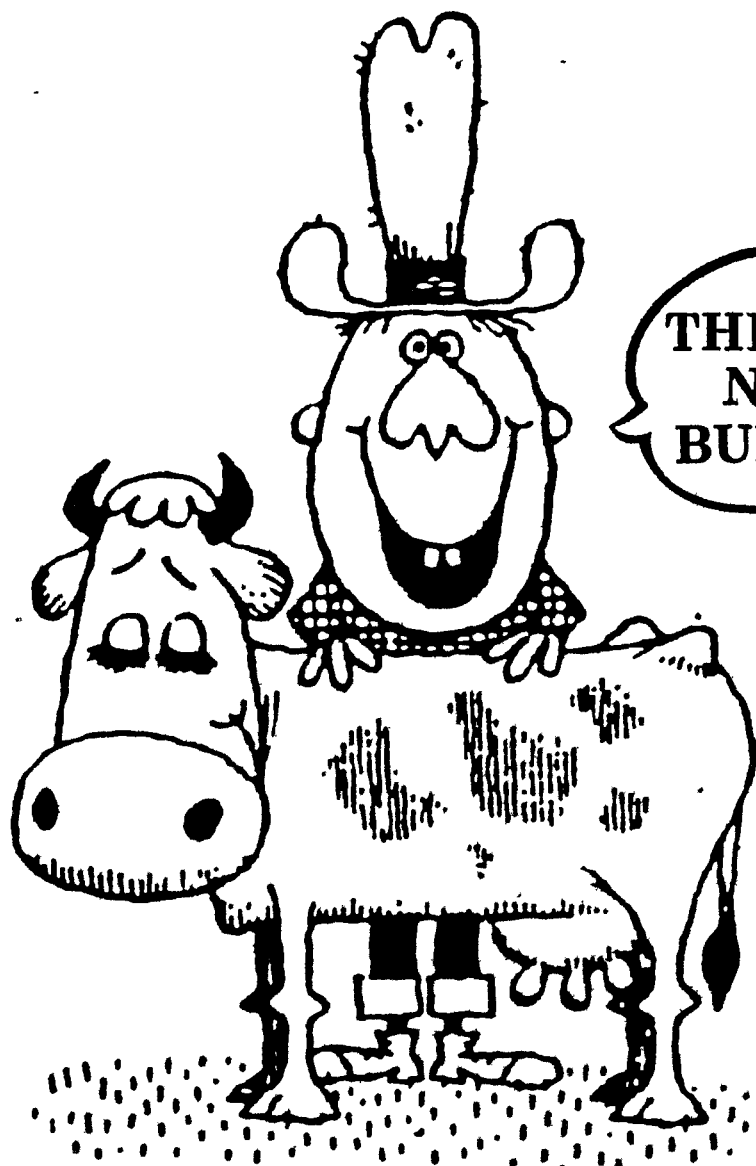
HERBS.....8 to 12 months

NUTS.....6 to 8 months for salted;
9 to 12 months for unsalted

VEGETABLES.....8 to 12 months

POULTRY
Whole turkey or chicken...10 to 12 months*

These figures were provided by the USDA, the American Frozen Food Institute and Katherine J.T. Humphrey of the Livingston County Cornell Cooperative Extension.
*The larger the cut, the longer it can be stored.
**Canned hams should not be frozen, because they may turn watery.



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Soil more than dirt to gardeners

EAST LANSING — Gardeners are often advised that the best soil for growing flowers, vegetables or about anything else is a good loam

What gardeners often have is clay — heavy and sticky when wet, rock hard when dry, or sand — easy to work, quick to dry in the spring but requiring prodigious amounts of water in the summer.

A good loam, says Darryl Warncke, Michigan State University soils scientist, contains clay, sand and silt — a particle between clay and sand in size — in more or less equal amounts. Loamy soil is ideal for garden plants because it holds moisture but also drains well so plenty of air can reach plant roots.

Gardeners with clay soils can improve them by tilling in large amounts of organic matter, such as lawn clippings, shredded leaves, compost, aged manure, cover crops or organic mulches. This improves soil aggregation — that is, it helps bind the small clay particles together to form larger stable units or aggregates. This, in turn, opens up spaces in the soil for better drainage and aeration. Though it may take several years, adding organic matter will eventually improve the soil and make it easier for water and roots to move through it.

Organic matter is also the prescription for sandy soils. Adding organic matter improves the water-holding capacity of sandy soils.

Adding sand to clay is not recommended.

"If you think about it, clay plus sand sounds like a recipe for bricks," Warncke observes. "Adding sand along with organic matter is OK, however. Sand and organic material

will help improve drainage and aeration in clay soils."

Half of good soil consists of mineral and organic matter — what we usually think of as dirt, he notes. Only 4 to 5 percent is organic matter, but it plays an important role. Adding organic matter annually helps stimulate activity by both macro- and microorganisms, which are important in cycling nutrients and aerating the soil.

The other half is divided fairly equally between water and air, which occupy the spaces between the solid particles. When the particles are very tiny, as with clay soils, they can become very tightly packed, driving out the air and making it difficult for

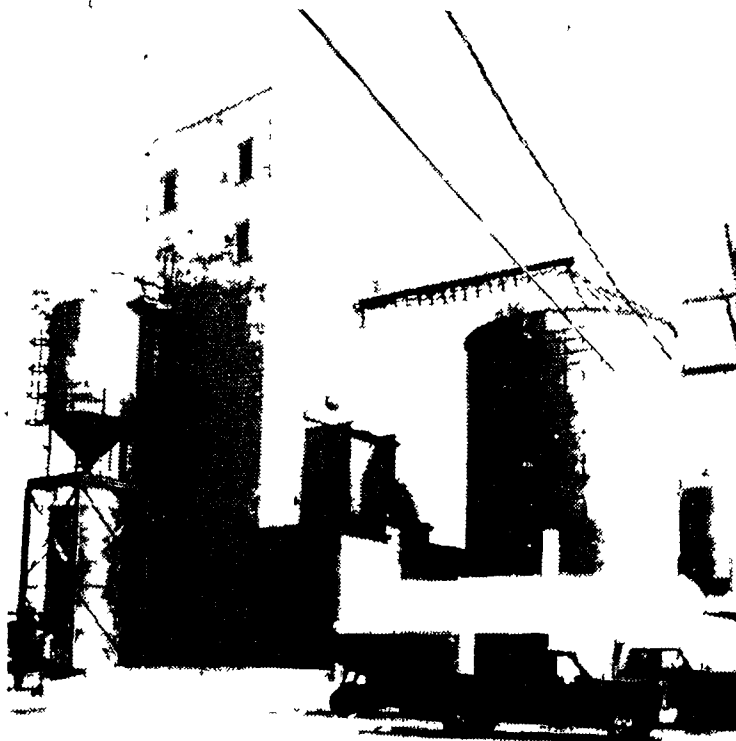
water to move either into or out of it. Sand particles are much larger. Spaces between them are also large, allowing water to pass through readily.

The one thing that can make a clay soil worse is to walk or drive on it, try to till it or dig it when it's wet. This drives out the air and packs the soil particles even tighter together, making the soil even more impenetrable.

"Improving your soil is not a one-shot operation — it may take literally years to convert clay or sandy soils into productive garden soil," Warncke says. "But the benefits are worth waiting and working for."

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but would not cost half as much during the winter months

—George Ade



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Tips for successful composting

EAST LANSING — Composting yard wastes and kitchen scraps is a good way to recycle valuable plant nutrients and reduce problems related to waste disposal.

Extension specialists at Michigan State University offer the following guidelines for successful backyard composting:

—Do layer materials 2 to 6 inches thick, mixing well.

—Do add topsoil to introduce the soil microorganisms that will break down plant tissues.

—Do add lime, small amounts of wood ash or crushed eggshells to neutralize acids that may form in compost — unless you're making compost specifically to use on acid-loving plants such as rhododendrons.

—Do mix nitrogen fertilizer or fresh manure into the pile to feed the soil microorganisms.

—Don't use partially composted materials around plants. The microorganisms working to break these materials down will rob your plants of the nitrogen they need. Unfinished compost may also contain plant disease organisms.

—Don't compost weeds that have gone to seed. The composting process may not kill the seeds, and using the compost will sow them in your lawn or garden.

—Don't compost diseased plant materials. A hot, active pile will generally destroy disease organisms, but any that survive will reintroduce the diseases to the garden and contribute to disease carryover from year to year.

—Do chop or shred large leaves and other coarse materials. This increases the surface area and speeds the decomposition process.

—Do add vegetable parings, coffee grounds, eggshells and other kitchen wastes. Don't add meat or fish scraps or dairy products to the pile — they will attract rats, dogs, raccoons and other animals.


—Do turn and water the pile as

necessary to promote decomposition.

—Do use compost to add plant nutrients and improve soil texture for flowers, vegetables, lawns and landscape ornamentals. Sterilize compost-topsoil mixtures before using to start seeds or pot indoor plants.



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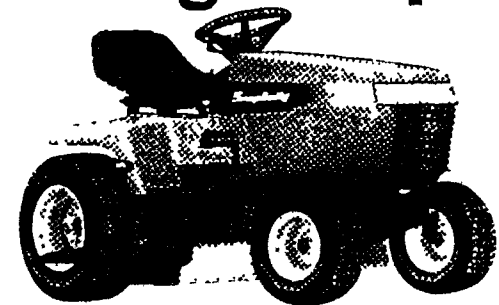
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Case International MAXXUM tractors win awards for innovation

BUCHANAN — Larry Evans, sales manager of LaPorte County Co-op has announced that the Case International 5200 Series of MAXXUM tractors — available at LaPorte County Co-op, was recently named among the Agricultural Engineering 50 as one of 1993's most outstanding innovations.

"We're pleased about the recognition given to the MAXXUM line, but I can't say we're surprised," Evans said. "Customers who've looked at or purchased 5200 Series machines tell us they're impressed by their innovative features and outstanding performance."

A panel of national engineering experts chosen by Agricultural Engineering magazine reviewed nominations from component suppliers, equipment manufacturers and systems developers representing many different industries before selecting the top 50. According to the magazine, the panel chose those developments that would make

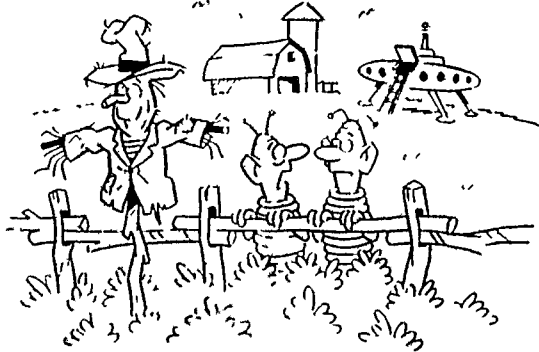
"worthwhile contributions to the advancement of engineering technology."

According to Evans, each of the four models in the 5200 Series is designed to offer big-tractor features and performance in a versatile, maneuverable package. The 5220, 5230, 5240 and 5250 are rated at 80, 90, 100 and 112 PTO horsepower, respectively. "Features such as field-

proven Case engines and Case-exclusive power-shuttle shift transmissions enable the MAXXUM tractors to perform the same jobs as larger machines," Evans explained, "but with the versatility and value found in mid-size tractors." Evans noted that LaPorte County Co-op has the award-winning 5200 Series MAXXUM tractors available for demonstrations.

Headquartered in Racine, Wis., Case is a worldwide manufacturer and marketer of Case International agricultural equipment and Case construction equipment. Case is a subsidiary of Houston-based

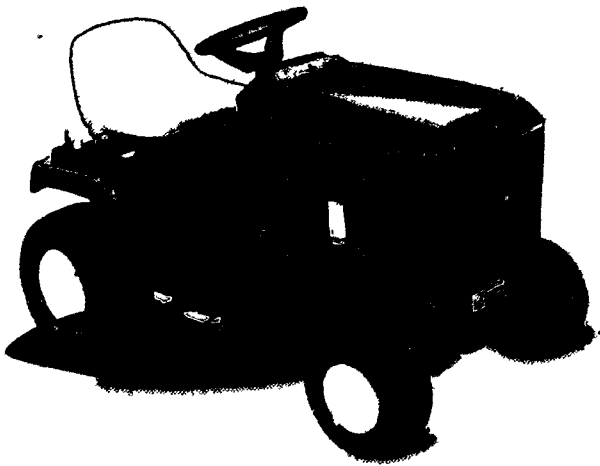
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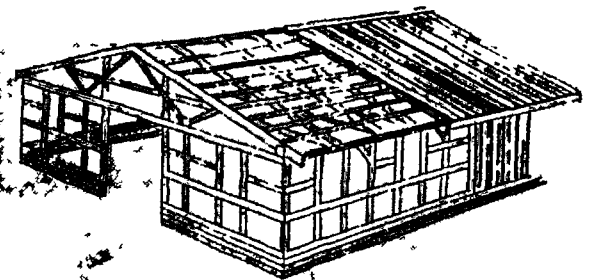
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Wildflower planting requires planning, work

EAST LANSING — Whether your fantasy is to turn a large expanse of lawn into a wildflower meadow or merely to establish a patch of wildflowers in your flower bed, succeeding with wildflowers requires a certain amount of work and planning.

"People sometimes think that, because wildflowers grow wild, a wildflower planting requires no planning or maintenance," observes Mary McLellan, master gardener coordinator at Michigan State University. "But choosing a good site and preparing it properly, controlling weeds and choosing species that are well adapted to your area are as important when planting wildflowers as when using more domesticated plants."

The first step in succeeding with wildflowers is to determine your goals. Maybe you want to turn a high-maintenance lawn area into a low-maintenance meadow with something in flower from spring through fall. Or perhaps you want to plant a patch of flowers to attract butterflies or a selection of woodland plants in a moist, shaded area. In

each case, your goal affects the plants you'll choose and how you'll maintain them.

Most wildflowers do best in full sun on moderately fertile soils that drain well, McLellan points out. Some, such as daylilies, will thrive on ditch banks and steep slopes, but wildflowers from seed are probably not the solution to a difficult site where nothing else will grow. There's probably a reason for that, and the characteristics of the site that are hostile to other plants will probably affect wildflowers, too.

A major factor in success with wildflowers is site preparation. Yes, wildflowers reseed themselves in the wild with no assistance. But when you're paying for seed by the ounce, you'd probably prefer to get the highest possible germination rate. The way to do this is to remove existing vegetation — especially if it's quackgrass or some other perennial weed that will quickly overwhelm young seedlings — and till or at least scratch up the soil surface a bit to promote good seed-to-soil contact.

Preparing the site one growing season and seeding the next works

well for wildflowers, McLellan notes.

Wildflower seed mixtures generally contain both annuals and perennials. Such a mixture gives you flowers during the first year (the annuals, which flower, produce seed and die all in one growing season) while the perennials are getting established. If you want a chance to enjoy the annuals, you almost have to plant in spring or early summer. An alternative is to buy seed of individual species and plant them in swaths or blocks rather than a jumble. This enables you to plant various species at different times.

"It's also a good way to save money on seed. Start small, with blocks of individual species, and harvest the seed," McLellan suggests. "With that seed, you can expand your planting the next year. This reduces the size of the site to be prepared at any one time, too, and spreads the labor of establishing the planting over two or more seasons."

Planting wildflower seed species in blocks also makes it easier to tell

which of the emerging seedlings are flowers and which are weeds and so takes some of the guesswork out of weed control, she adds. Regular weeding or mulching to inhibit weed growth is necessary to prevent a weed take-over of the wildflower site.

Though wildflowers are generally fairly drought tolerant, they're like other seed-grown plants in that they need moisture for germination and early growth. Keeping the site evenly moist for the first 4 to 6 weeks gets the seedlings off to a good start. Once they're growing well, you can gradually taper off watering except during extended dry periods, relying on normal rainfall to supply their needs.

Once your wildflower planting is established, it needs to be mowed annually in late fall. The cut material can remain where it falls or be raked off and composted.

Most seed catalogs offer wildflower mixtures. Make sure the mix you choose contains seeds of plants suited to your growing zone. A


mixture of desert plants suited to southern California won't do well in Michigan, McLellan notes. Some specialty producers offer seeds of individual species. For a list of seed suppliers, contact The Wildflower Group, A S T A, 601 13th St N W, Suite 570 South, Washington, DC 20005-1593.



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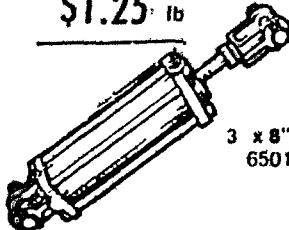
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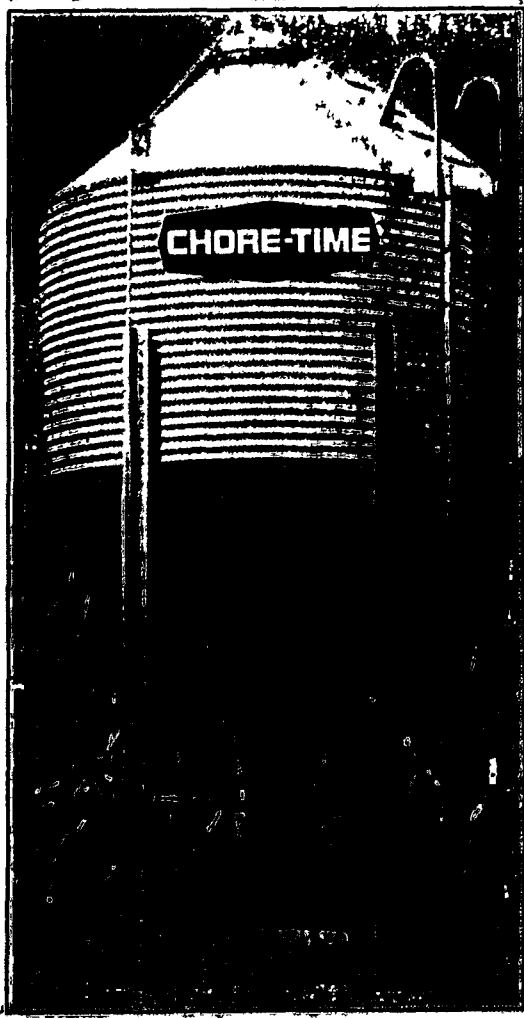
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Built-in resistance helps reduce problems in garden

EAST LANSING — Weeds, insects and weather are probably the top three vegetable garden problems. But plant diseases can be devastating, too.

The best way to avoid disease problems in the vegetable garden is to plant disease-resistant varieties whenever possible, says Mary Hausbeck, extension plant pathologist at Michigan State University. Disease resistance, combined with rotation of certain crops around the garden, should virtually eliminate untreatable soil-borne diseases that can carry over in the garden from year to year, she says. Of particular concern are Verticillium and Fusarium wilts.

Crop rotation, she explains, is moving related groups of crops each year so crops susceptible to the same diseases and pests don't follow one another in the same spot. This interferes with the buildup of pests and disease organisms and their carryover from one year to the next.

Some diseases are transmitted by viruses, bacteria or fungi on seeds or plants. Starting with disease-free seeds and transplants is more likely if you obtain seeds from reputable dealers than if you save your own seed, Hausbeck suggests. Saving seeds from last year's garden may be importing last year's problems, too.

Choosing a well-drained, sunny

spot for the garden can help prevent root and foliar diseases, Hausbeck says.

"Plants grown in low-lying or poorly drained areas often develop root rot," she observes. "Also, high humidity in these areas means foliage is slow to dry after a rain, dew or overhead irrigation. Many leaf diseases can get established only if leaves remain wet for long periods of time, so you want to place your garden where cool, moist air will drain away from plants, plants receive eight to 10 hours of direct sun each day and air can circulate freely

around them."

When diseases are carried by insects, the primary way to prevent the disease is to control the insect. Bacterial wilt of cucumbers and squashes is a good example. The only way to keep it from killing your cucurbits is to prevent the cucumber beetles that carry it from feeding on your plants and transmitting the wilt organism.

Sanitation, such as cleaning up diseased plant materials after harvest and burning or burying them some distance from the garden, controlling weeds that can serve as alternate

hosts for diseases and pests, and providing crops with the water and nutrients they need to grow vigorously are other factors in garden disease control. Plants under stress from too little or too much water or low soil fertility are more susceptible to diseases, Hausbeck explains.

Some diseases may occur in spite of all these efforts, she notes. For example, tomatoes are often affected by fungi that cause leaf spots or blights. Applying fungicides as soon as symptoms are noted should prevent serious losses of foliage or fruit.



Buchanan Feed Mill, located on Railroad Street in Buchanan, offers a variety of pet products including food and bird feed. Hours are 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday and 8 a.m.-noon on Saturday. For more information, call 95-3391. (Photo by Jane Peterson)

Farm Focus

AG Trade Helps U.S. Economy

Farmers help the United States economy by creating a large favorable trade balance of U.S. agricultural exports over agricultural imports.

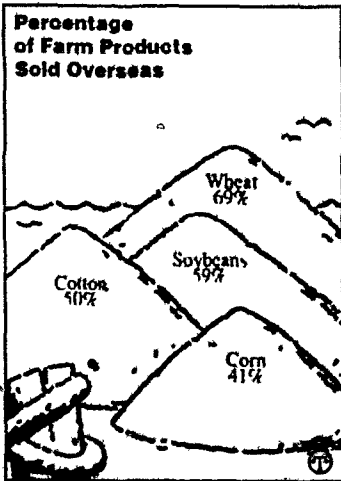
The United States is the world's largest exporter of agricultural products (\$40.2 billion worth annually).

The United States is overwhelmingly an industrial nation, only 2 percent of the population works on farms. But U.S. farmers are so productive that agriculture still accounts for more than 15 percent of all U.S. exports. The production from one out of every 2.5 acres of cropland harvested is exported.

The great productivity of U.S. farms allows us to use all of the farm products we can inside the United States and still be able to sell 69 percent of our wheat, 41 percent of our corn, 59 percent of our soybean products and more than 50 percent of our cotton to earn income in foreign countries.

U.S. farm productivity helps the nation hold strong market shares in the worldwide market for farm products. The U.S. shares of important crop markets are on the order of 37 percent of world wheat exports, 86 percent of world soybean exports and 21 percent of world rice exports.

Looking at it another way, U.S. farmers have developed their exports to a point where 25 percent



Graphic provided by Deere & Company

of the income they generate to keep their operations going comes from foreign consumers instead of U.S. consumers. The huge export industry that U.S. farm productivity is able to keep supplied employs more than a million people in the United States. Each dollar's worth of U.S. farm commodities exported generates about \$1.59 in additional economic activity in finance, transportation, warehousing, and farm supply manufacturing, distribution and sales.

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The Brooklyn Botanic Garden blooms in the middle of one of the largest cities in the world. The well-maintained formal and informal gardens communicate the vitality of nature amid urban brick and concrete. Reclaimed from a waste dump in 1910, the Garden's 50 acres are devoted to the collection, study and interpretation of plants for the enjoyment and education of all.

Every season a new facet of the Garden is highlighted. The grand spring spectacle of fragrant magnolias and massed flowering cherries and crab-apples, for which the Garden is world famous, stands in contrast to winter's tracery of leafless branches. Some 12,000 different kinds of plants are grown here and all are labeled with the common and scientific names and country of origin. Almost every country is represented, alders from Corsica rub branches with Eurasian birches and the perpetual warmth under glass nurtures a host of plants including the soursop of Tropical America.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden maintains a level of excellence in horticulture, education, science, cultural programs and community service that shows in its scope and beauty.

Louie Zelasko of Lake's Farm Service is pictured in the New Carlisle, Ind., office. The business sells fertilizers and chemicals in addition to buying, selling and storing grain. The staff can also create a custom blend of fertilizer, lime or chemicals to fit any farmer's needs. (Photo by Maryjeanne Holmes)

R.F.D. by MIKE MARLAND

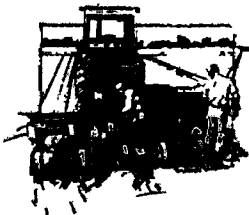


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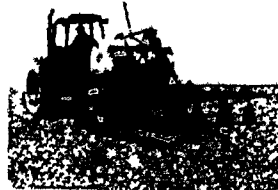


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Take the garden tiller for example. Many larger units on the market today offer tilling power but are ineffective as cultivators during the growing season. As a result the gardener spends many hours weeding by hand during the peak growing months of summer.

One of the best tools for the backyard garden, says Homelite, a leading manufacturer of American-made lawn and garden equipment, is the HTC-12 mini tiller/cultivator. A tough and compact unit powered by a two-cycle engine, it tills a 7- or 10-inch wide path up to 8 inches deep. It weighs only 24 pounds and runs about a half-hour on a tank of fuel.

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A bulb primer on the engine, as well as a rugged worm gear drive transmission, will provide many seasons of trouble-free gardening. The HTC-12 gas-powered mini tiller/cultivator is one of many labor-saving products featured in Homelite's free lawn and garden equipment catalog. To get a copy, write Homelite Dept. HP, P.O. Box 7047, Charlotte, NC 28241.



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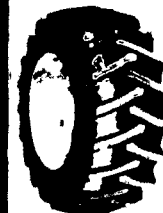
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Soybean producers launch information blitz on industry

The healthy benefits of food items made from soybean products has been kept a secret far too long. But, thanks to the National Soybean Checkoff, that is changing soon.

The United Soybean Board (USB), which administers the checkoff program nationally, is conducting a blitz of the nation's top organizations that influence what people eat. The blitz will contain information about the many healthy benefits that can be gained from foods containing soy products.

Soy products have been recognized by food experts for years as a source of high quality protein and other essential elements that contribute to a healthy diet.

USB hopes a new "Influencer Kit" will take that information and make it common knowledge among grocery store chains, food service operators, consumer affairs advisors, dietitians and nutritionists.

The kit is being distributed at trade shows, by state checkoff boards and through a direct mail campaign. It contains a wide variety of information about soybeans and foods made with soy products, such as soybean oil.

The kit's Foodservice Guide provides a detailed history of the soybean — from where it was developed, to how it got to the United States, and more.

It also explains how soybean oil enhances the natural flavor of foods. Whether it is used as a shortening for old-fashioned pie crust or blended with a flavored vinegar to a new dressing, soybean oil's clean, neutral flavor allows the real taste of food to come through.

More information shows why soybean oil is an excellent frying medium that retains its flavor while being readily available and competitively priced. The kit also has a chart that shows soybean oil's healthy nutritional profile compared to other oils.

The Healthcare Guide provides even more detailed nutritional information, including hydrogenation, fatty acids, whole soybean foods, soy proteins and isoflavones, which are being studied by the National Cancer Institute as a possible factor in inhibiting tumor growth or providing other kinds of protective effects against cancer.

The Normal Person's Seven-Day Soyfoods Menu highlights breakfast, lunch and dinner menus, and shows where soybean oil fits into a healthy diet.

The menu, which includes recipes and cooking directions, informs consumers how they can eat a week's

worth of meals that are workable for today's busy families and allow for a few guilty pleasures (such as brownies and french fries).

Other information in the kit identifies how soybeans fit into the

cating plan described in USDA's Food Guide Pyramid.

In addition, soybean producers are distributing a newsletter, The Soy Connection, to dietitians across the country. The newsletter is filled with

information about the healthy benefits of soy products.

Through the National Soybean Checkoff, USB is funding the initial printing and distribution of the "Influencer Kits." Through checkoff funding, soybean producers hope to continue to maintain and expand this crucial market. In doing so, they are helping themselves while helping Americans learn that eating foods

made with soy products can significantly improve their diets and their overall health — and that makes for a winning combination for both producers and consumers.

If you would like to request copies of any of the materials listed in this article, please write to: Influencer Kit Request, Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee, PO Box 287, Frankenmuth, MI 48734.



Bob Cheek of Carter Lumber, located at Red Arrow Highway in Bridgman, shows off one of the many barns available at the business. The store carries everything for the do-it-yourselfer. Hours are Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-6 p.m.; Saturday, 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.; and Sunday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. For more information, call 465-6600. (Photo by Jane Peterson)

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| JD 125 16' forage box w/running gear | \$1,800 |
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| NH 213 spreader, like new | \$2,500 |
| Used NH 516 spreader w/endgate | \$1,000 |
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Study explores soyfoods in space

In July 1993 Food and Agro-Systems, Inc., a Sunnyvale, Calif.-based food process engineering firm, presented the National Aeronautics and Space Administration with a final draft of its report "Methodologies for Processing Plant Material Into Acceptable Food on a Small Scale: Phase II." This report, the result of over two years of research, covered harvesting and processing techniques for four crops that may be grown in space under zero-gravity conditions — soybeans, sweet potatoes, wheat and white potatoes.

For the soybean-related research, FASI contracted with Soyatech, Inc. of Bar Harbor, Maine. Soyatech's contribution included the recommendation to utilize extrusion and screw passing technology, with modifications, to process soybean oil and flour. Soyatech also recommended that extrusion cooking technology be further modified to process soybeans for making soymilk and other aqueous-extracted soy-protein-based products.

This area of research has now become the focal point of a new project undertaken by FASI and Soyatech and funded by the North Central Soybean Research Program (The NCSR is a consortium of eight soybean producing states including Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin).

According to Tom Parks of FASI, "The systems that we deemed were suitable for processing soybeans in space may offer some unique advantages for processing soybeans right here on Earth. We would like to determine what the value of the industry would be of commercializing such a process."

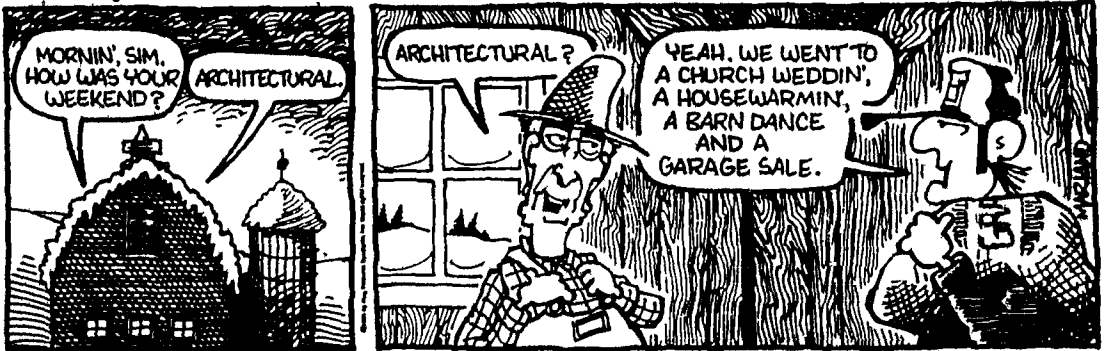
Last September, Parks, along with Peter Golbitz of Soyatech, traveled throughout the midwest to visit with researchers and process engineers to ascertain the feasibility of constructing a modified extrusion-cooker for processing soybeans into oil and flour, as well as into soymilk and other soyfood products. Parks

and Golbitz met with representatives of Insta-Pro, Mycal's Nichii Co., Iowa State University, University of Illinois' INTSOY, Texas A&M's Food Protein R&D Center and Johnson Space Center in Houston. Their findings were to be presented to the NCSR in February.

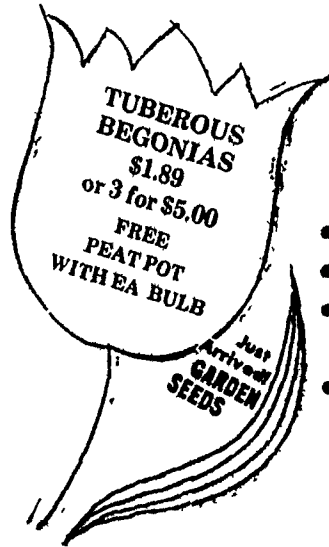


Some termites build nests that are up to 20 feet high.

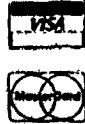
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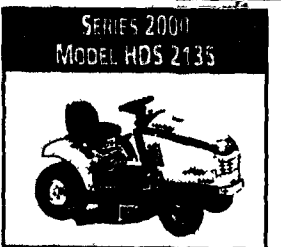
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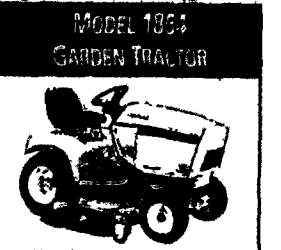


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Ornamental grasses add year-round interest to garden, landscape

EAST LANSING — Annual and perennial ornamental grasses add color and texture to the garden or landscape year round. The wide range of sizes and forms and the various colors in foliage and flowers mean ornamental grasses can fill a variety of landscaping roles, from low border to specimen plant to groundcover to screen.

Mary McLellan, master gardener program coordinator at Michigan State University, observes that ornamental grasses are often incorporated into perennial gardens, where they contribute their own ornamental characteristics while serving as a backdrop for perennial flowers.

The planting site for ornamental grasses should receive at least six hours of direct sunlight per day. These plants are not particular about soil — anywhere one can grow

annual or perennial flowers will do nicely for ornamental grasses

Grasses may be grown from seed or divisions planted in spring or fall. Spring planting is preferred, McLellan notes, because it gives the plants plenty of time to get their root systems established before winter. Fall-planted grasses should be protected with a mulch of straw or weed-free hay the first winter. A spring and summer mulch of woodchips or some other organic material is recommended to discourage weeds and conserve soil moisture.

Ornamental grasses are relatively free of disease and pest problems and do well in soils of average fertility, though they do benefit from fertilization in the spring after growth begins. Established plants need watering only when rainfall is scarce

Newly planted seedlings or divisions need regular watering until they are established.

Perennial grasses can be cut back to the ground in the fall, but cleanup is usually put off until early spring so the grasses can add interest to the winter landscape.

Division of crowded plants, like cleanup, is best done in early spring

before new growth begins. It can also take place in late summer, Aug. 15-Sept. 15. Dig up the entire clump with the root ball intact, and cut it into large segments with a sharp knife or a spade. Replant the sections at the same depth at which they were growing before.

For more information on ornamental grasses for Michigan,

including a list of species and their ornamental characteristics, contact the local county MSU Extension office and ask for bulletin NCR 461, "Ornamental Grasses for the Midwest." It's also available from the MSU Bulletin Office, 10B Agriculture Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824-1039, phone 517-355-0240.



This brand new model from Agco White is available at HFS Tractor, located on Stevensville-Baroda Road in Baroda. It has a state-of-the-art cab with 12 speeds on the go shift. There are many other items at HFS Tractor as well. To show customers how many, the business will host a product parade on March 18. Manufacturer representatives will be on hand to answer questions and demonstrations will be held. For more information, call 422-1753. (Photo by Jane Peterson)

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Chipper-shredders: use with caution

EAST LANSING — To anyone with a landscape to tend, the ads for chipper-shredders sound like the answer to any number of problems.

Want to build a compost pile to recycle lawn and garden wastes? Use the chipper-shredder to prepare materials. Shredding and chipping reduce the volume of material and increase its surface area so it decomposes faster.

Clearing brush? Use the chipper-shredder to turn brush and even small tree limbs of 2 inches in diameter or less into wood chips for landscape use.

Chipper-shredders can be very handy, says Howard Doss, Extension safety specialist at Michigan State University.

"But anything that can reduce 2-inch tree limbs to a pile of chips obviously needs to be used properly to be used safely," he says.

The first step in safe operation is to read and understand the operator's manual, he advises. If a careful reading leaves some questions, contact the dealer that sold the unit.

When using gasoline-powered units, check the fuel level and add gasoline as necessary before starting the engine. If it needs to be refueled later, stop the engine and allow it to cool first. Refuel well away from any open flame or other sources of ignition. Store gasoline in an approved container in an outside shed, whenever possible.

Plug an electrically powered unit into an outlet equipped with a ground fault interrupter. The GFI is designed to stop the electrical current

immediately when it senses a very small current flow differential or a "leak" in the insulation covering the wires. Use an extension cord of 16 gauge wire or a lower number, such as 12 or 14. Limiting extension cord length to 50 feet or less is advisable, Doss says. Make sure the cord has a three-prong plug. The three-prong plug maintains a ground wire in case of appliance wiring failure.

Maintain all guards and shields. When shredding leaves, use the tamper on the unit to push leaves into the shredding chamber. "Never reach into the hopper of a chipper-shredder while it is running," Doss emphasizes.

Appropriate clothing and safety equipment for operating a chipper-shredder include eye and ear protection because chippers are noisy, heavy work gloves and close-fitting clothing. Baggy or loose clothing and scarves and other garments with dangling ends could get tangled in moving parts or brush being drawn into the chipper.

"Chipping and shredding brush and limbs is not a spectator event," Doss points out. "Keep bystanders at a distance during operation to avoid injuries. Because of the high personal risk, do not allow children under 16 to feed or adjust a powered chipper."

Now is the Time
for Stabilized Nitrogen



Area farmers enjoyed looking at the various displays and chatting with their neighbors during the annual LaPorte County Co-ops, Buchanan branch, open house. (Photo by Don Holmes)

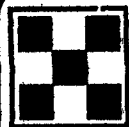
Annuals thrive in sunlight

(Continued from page 10)

p.m. Mound-shaped plants bear flowers that are often mottled in shades of white, pink, salmon, yellow, red and rose. Plants sown from seed in May, after the danger of frost is past, will usually begin to bloom in July and continue until frost.

Children have a natural affinity for sunflowers. Their large seeds are easy to plant and quick to germinate and grow. And the giant varieties — up to 10 feet tall with flowers up to a foot across — provide natural photo opportunities for young gardeners and their parents. Sunflowers thrive in full sun and tolerate heat and drought. The seeds can be harvested for roasting or using raw in salads or baking, but one has to get to them before the squirrels and birds!

Dozens of other flowering annuals are available as seeds or transplants for use in a sunny garden. For a guide to growing and using annuals, ask at the county MSU Extension office for bulletin NCR 399, "Growing and Using Annuals and Bulbs." It will help one select annuals to fit specific needs, whether the site is sunny or shady, dry or wet, a flower bed or a flower pot.



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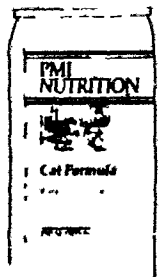
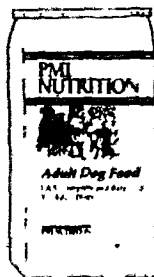
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Green and Growing

Bob Traciński, John Deere's Consumer Information Manager

To water or not to water?

To water or not to water? That is the question, especially when summer's searing heat threatens havoc on your yard. Luckily, it's not a trick question. In fact, depending on the situation, either answer is the right choice. Here's why.

Most lawns need about an inch of water every five to seven days during mowing season. Some of this will certainly come from spring or summer showers, which you can measure with a rain gauge. But if nature doesn't cooperate, you might begin to notice telltale signs of thirst:

— The lawn turns a bluish-green color.

— Footprints show in the yard as you walk on it.

— Eventually, the grass turns brown and the soil is hard and cracked.

By now, you have an important decision to make: water as soon as possible or don't water at all.

Most kinds of grass can survive occasional droughts. In fact, arid conditions may even kill water-loving weeds and discourage diseases. If the weather forecast calls for an extended dry spell and water is expensive or rationed, then you might decide not to water your lawn at all.

This option, believe it or not, is preferable to giving your yard just an occasional watering. A once-in-a-while sprinkling promotes a cycle of growth and dormancy that can actually harm your lawn.

Roots use food to grow when water is available. When all available water has been used for growing and for making and storing food, the grass goes dormant. This pattern, if set irregularly, can weaken your lawn and make it more susceptible to damage from stressful conditions.

With this in mind, if water is available and affordable, water your yard thoroughly and regularly as soon as it shows signs of thirst. A few simple guidelines will ensure your lawn makes the most of every drop.

First, water early in the morning so that water droplets on the blades will evaporate by sundown. These droplets can harbor disease-causing organisms, so you want them to dry as quickly as possible.

Mow on the high side: higher grass blades will shade the soil and slow evaporation of water from the soil. Return grass clippings to the lawn as you mow. The finely-chopped clippings can form a thin compost layer and help hold moisture. In fact, clippings are 85 percent water; they decompose to feed the grass roots without adding to a thatch problem.

Next, gauge how long it takes to water your lawn by using a few flat-bottomed plastic containers. Make a mark one inch from the bottom of each container. Spread the containers

throughout your yard and time how long it takes to fill them to the one-inch mark. Then water for that length of time once a week during the growing season.

Remember, when summer starts to simmer, your lawn could wither. So water regularly and you'll have a healthy, attractive lawn come rain or come shine!

Now for a few questions: How does soil type affect watering?

Sandy soils are characterized by large pores that hold very little water. These soils should be watered more frequently, but with less water since it drains away so quickly. On the other

hand, clay soils have tiny pores that hold a great deal of water but don't drain very fast. So be careful not to overwater clay-based lawns; too much water could make your lawn susceptible to root rot and other diseases.

I've always heard you shouldn't mow your yard when it's wet. Why not?

Mowing wet grass can compact damp soil, preventing the movement of air and water into the ground. This could contribute to thatch build-up and spread fungus disease. More importantly, you shouldn't mow a wet lawn to avoid slipping or falling, particularly if you're using a walk-behind mower.

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MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU Quick Facts

The National Corn Growers Association says the U.S. will gain nearly 6,000 jobs and \$2 billion a year in economic growth if the EPA allows farm-based ethanol fuel to be a part of the nation's alternative fuel program. The EPA is scheduled to make a final decision by June.

Speaking of dairy foods, dairy manufacturing plants in Michigan produced 1.8 million pounds of butter in November, one percent more than a year ago. Ice cream output totaled 1.2 million gallons, down 28 percent.

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GOOD Morning News

The Food Guide Pyramid May be One Key to Healthy Living

There's good news about America's eating habits. According to a new survey, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's new Food Guide Pyramid is causing more Americans to eat well. Two out of five Americans who say they understand this food guide have changed their eating habits for the better since the recommendations were adopted in 1990. The bad news is that the majority of Americans — 62% — still don't understand the pyramid.

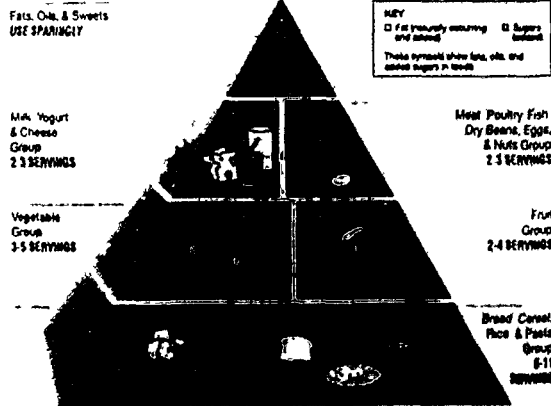
A telephone survey of 502 adults, conducted for Quaker oatmeal by The Gallup Organization, found Americans familiar with the Food Guide Pyramid much more likely to have increased their fiber consumption (55% vs 34%) for those not familiar, and to have decreased their intake of cholesterol (56% vs 43%), fat (65% vs 45%), and sodium (40% vs 32%) in the past year.

"This study confirms that the Food Guide Pyramid can be very effective in encouraging Americans to change diet habits," said Dr. Barbara Levine, Ph.D., R.D., director of the Nutrition Information Center in New York City. "But it also reminds us of the importance of making people aware of the pyramid and the fact that they should be eating more foods like oatmeal and whole grain breads."

According to the U.S.D.A., Americans should build their diet on a foundation of 6-11 servings of grains per day, followed by 3-5 servings of vegetables and 2-4 servings of fruit. Americans should be getting at least half of their calories from complex carbohydrates found in grains, fruits and vegetables, Levine said. But they should be nutritious grain products that are a good source of

fiber and low in fat, sodium, cholesterol and sugar. Foods like oatmeal, whole grain bread, and rice and pasta with low fat, low sodium sauces are best, as opposed to cakes and cookies, or pasta with heavy cream sauces.

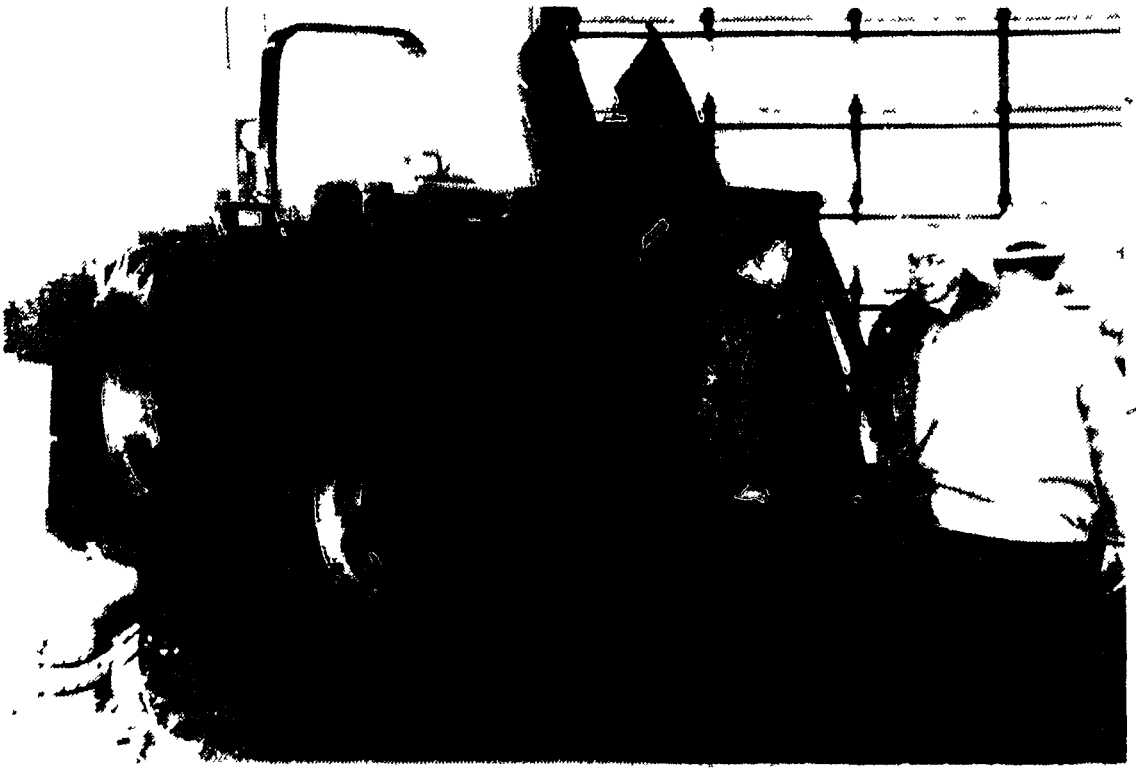
"Breakfast is a perfect opportunity to consume the grains we need," Levine said. "Many breakfasts contain complex carbohydrates and



After sleeping six to eight hours at night, our bodies need this type of fuel to get us going in the morning. A breakfast like Quaker oatmeal is filled with the nutrients necessary to satisfy our appetites and give us the energy we need to be productive throughout the day."

And Americans agree. The Gallup survey found that twice as many people rated oatmeal excellent as compared to cold cereal for helping them to be productive and keep them going until lunch (25% vs 12%).

While many Americans still are not that familiar with the new food guide, the survey revealed that nearly half of all Americans want to learn more about diet and nutrition. If you're like millions of Americans who want to be educated, follow the recommendations of the Food Guide Pyramid and get into the simple habit of starting your day with a grain based breakfast that is filled with complex carbohydrates and fiber.



These farmers were pictured while sitting on a front-end loader and chatting during the LaPorte County Co-ops, Buchanan branch, open house. (Photo by Don Holmes)

When is it too soon to plant a garden?

EAST LANSING — In much of Michigan, Memorial Day weekend is the traditional time to plant the vegetable garden. It's a tradition based in a climatic fact of life: warm-weather crops planted much before May 20 in all but the southernmost counties stand a good chance of being killed by frost.

Gardening can and should start much before that, however.

"The question is not only when to plant, but what to plant," says Mary McLellan, master gardener coordinator at Michigan State University. "Some crops can be planted as soon as the soil is dry enough to work without clumping."

Lettuce and spinach, beets, carrots, Swiss chard, radishes,

onions, the cole crops — cabbage, broccoli, Chinese cabbage, Brussels sprouts, kohlrabi — and peas will grow better in cool weather, she points out. They're planted early in the spring for a late spring or early summer harvest and in mid-to late summer for a fall harvest. Unlike tomatoes, peppers and other warm-weather crops, they can tolerate some frost.

Warm-weather crops need warm soil and freedom from frost and low temperatures. If rushed into cold soil, seeds of such crops as snap beans and sweet corn may rot rather than germinate. Transplants of tomatoes, peppers and eggplant set into cold soil will fail to grow until the soil warms up — unless, of

course, they're killed by frost or cold.

"In other words, there is no one right time to plant the garden, but

there is a best time for each crop, depending on its need for warm soil and air temperatures," McLellan sums up. "Gardeners can rush the season to some extent by using black plastic to warm the soil so seeds germinate better and hot caps and other plant protectors to prevent frost damage, but protecting large numbers of plants can require significant amounts of time and effort and some expense. For one or two plants when bragging rights to the first ripe tomatoes in the neighborhood are at stake, of course, it might be justified."

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Simple Steps to Better Bulbs

Few moments in life are as welcome as the first sign of spring, when the green shoots of fall planted bulbs first pop up out of the ground. They promise spectacular beauty, which they deliver. Your hard work last fall planting tulips, narcissi, crocuses and other bulbs will be richly rewarded with glorious blooms.

While you're enjoying the view it's a good time to think ahead to next year's bloom. Some simple steps taken now can pay off with a yard full of beautiful bulb flowers for many springs to come.

Give "naturalized" bulbs a spring energy boost. The term naturalized refers to bulbs that are left in the ground to return year after year. Some are better "returners" than others. Most tulips, for example, are magnificent their first year of bloom, but diminish over time. On the other hand narcissi, such as daffodils, will not only return but multiply over the years.

When the first shoots appear in spring naturalized bulbs appreciate a shot of a high nitrogen liquid fertilizer such as Stern's Miracid. The young shoots crave nitrogen, and Miracid contains 30 percent of this vital nutrient. Mixed in water according to label directions, the nutrients can be absorbed through the plant's leaves as well as the roots. Don't worry about the word acid in Miracid, that simply refers to the product's ability to slightly acidify soil through a natural partnership with micro organisms in the soil.

When the blooms of spring bulbs in garden beds have faded, cut the flower heads off, but leave the green foliage. Professional bulb growers in Holland call it "heading" the bulb. By removing the flower, the plant will expend no effort making seed pods. It will put its energy into building a strong, healthy bulb for next year's bloom. This technique is especially helpful for tulips, but is labor intensive and best confined

to bulbs in the bed and border. For naturalized bulbs, say a whole field of daffodils, it's not worth the effort. Natural is natural.

If bulbs are growing in the lawn, hold off mowing the lawn until the naturalized bulbs die back. For a good return next season, it's necessary to let

the foliage remain for six weeks. This is usually not a problem for very early bulbs, such as crocus. However, for later blooming daffodils, six weeks may be too long to let the lawn grow. In that case, mow them down, and next fall confine your "daffs" to a more marginal area of the yard.



BULBS SUCH AS TULIPS are nature's spring gift. Rewarding these plants with a spring "energy boost" using a high nitrogen liquid fertilizer, such as Stern's Miracid, will help them to return more glorious next year.


MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU Quick Facts

Increased paper recycling will result in slower projected use of pulpwood and timber harvest. That will extend timber supplies. After decreasing for two centuries, the amount of U.S. forest land has stabilized. Today we have about the same forest area as in 1920.

says if cities would stop picking up grass clippings and instead would collect leaves for distribution on farm fields, it would be cheaper for the towns and practical for farmers as well.

U.S. sugar consumption is expected to reach 9 million tons, up 2 percent from last year. U.S. sugar production is projected to hit 7 million tons in 1994, down nearly half a million tons from the record 1993 crop.

A Purdue University solid waste specialist says cities and towns should begin farmland-spreading programs for their fallen leaves. Oscar Hopkins



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To save seeds or not to save seeds is the question

EAST LANSING — Whether you should save seeds from one year to the next depends on what you mean by "save seeds."

If you mean keeping leftover commercially packaged seeds, the answer is probably yes — do keep them. With a few exceptions, seeds of most vegetables and annual flowers will perform well the second year if they're stored properly.

If you mean saving seeds of crops you grew this year, the answer is less clear cut.

Mary McLellan, master gardener program coordinator at Michigan State University, says one guide in deciding whether to save seed from a garden is the variety planted and whether it is a hybrid or open-pollinated variety.

Hybrids produce seeds, she notes, but when pollination occurs, desirable traits are often lost in the shuffle of genetic material. The seeds from a hybrid variety generally do

not produce plants like the plants that produced the seeds. In fact, the plants produced from these seeds may not even resemble one another.

"Throw in the possibility that closely related plants may have cross-pollinated, and you have the potential for interesting but not very reliable results from home-grown seeds," she says.

Open-pollinated crops, on the other hand, breed true from home-grown seed unless crops cross-pollinated. Unless gardeners are preserving a rare or old-time variety that's no longer commercially available, however, there's little or no economic reason to go to all the work of harvesting, drying, cleaning and storing home-grown seeds. Commercially packaged seeds, especially those of open-pollinated varieties, are quite inexpensive.

Some gardeners like the feeling of self-sufficiency that comes from producing seed one year and sowing it the next, McLellan observes. For

those who want to try it, she recommends open-pollinated varieties of watermelon and muskmelon, string or snap beans, tomatoes, peppers and eggplant in the vegetable garden, and petunias, impatiens, cosmos, celosia, sunflowers, marigolds and zinnias in the annuals garden.

Let flowers and vegetables mature before harvesting seed. Remove the seeds from the fruit or flower head and dry them on paper towels in a warm, dry spot. Drying reduces the chance of mold damage during storage, McLellan explains, and improves the likelihood of good germination.

To store either homegrown or leftover commercially packaged seeds, place them in envelopes in an airtight container with a moisture-absorbing material. Silica gel or some other flower-drying material works well. Gardeners can also use two heaping tablespoons of nonfat dry

milk wrapped in a few thicknesses of facial tissue. The wrapping needs to be porous enough to let moisture in but sturdy enough not to dissolve.

Place the container in a cool, dry storage place.

"Often the easiest way to store seeds is in a jar in the refrigerator," McLellan says. "But any cool, dry spot will do, as long as temperatures remain below 55 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit."

Storage conditions aren't the only factor in seed longevity. How long seeds remain viable depends first on the type of seed. Some seeds — including asparagus, geranium,

delphinium and salvia — simply do not remain viable from one year to the next, no matter how they're stored. Seeds that may be good the second year but rarely keep beyond that include sweet corn, leek, onion, parsley, parsnip, rhubarb and salsify. Moderately long-lived seeds may still germinate after three to five years. These include beans, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celery, kale, lettuce, okra, peas, pepper, radish, spinach, turnip and watermelon. Seeds that may remain viable for more than five years include beet, cucumber, eggplant, muskmelon and tomato.

MSU publication covers annuals and bulbs

EAST LANSING — Bulbs and flowering annuals are mainstays of the home flower garden. For tips on which to plant and how to use them, gardeners can turn to their county Extension office.

Annuals and bulbs are the subject of a Michigan State University Extension bulletin, "Growing and Using Annuals and Bulbs," Extension bulletin NCR 399, and it's available from the MSU Bulletin Office and county Extension offices around the state.

It covers garden planning and design, selecting annuals, buying and growing annuals from seed, controlling pests and diseases, and growing annuals in containers, as well as buying bulbs, using bulbs in the landscape and storing bulbs. Charts listing blooming times, heights, planting spacing, flower color, light requirements, and tips on growing and using these plants make it easy to find the annuals and bulb that are just right.

Weed—a plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson


Publications and videos on other gardening topics are also available. Contact your county Extension office

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Provide dairy cattle with nutrients when grain, forage in short supply

LAPORT, Ind — Many producers are experiencing shortages of grain and forage for their dairy cattle. When facing these shortages, they should consider several alternative methods for providing cattle with necessary nutrients, according to Dewey Bucher, feed fieldman, LaPorte County Farm Bureau Cooperative Assn. Inc.

"To conserve and extend forages for lactating cows, producers can divert forage from calves to the cows. A good way to do this is to feed Calf Primer I and II to the calves

"These rations provide complete nutrition, so there's no need to feed calves hay or silage," Bucher said.

Farmers can also feed one of the Co-op's mid-protein, high energy complete feeds instead of a high protein source and corn.

"Substituting alfalfa pellets and cubes for a portion of the cow's ration is another option," Bucher said.

If extra grain is fed to extend forages, the diets should have adequate "effective" fiber (ADF greater than 20 percent). Watch cows

carefully for rumination levels and monitor the butterfat levels of their milk.

"When feeding extra grain, make sure you feed several times per day. Substitute some dry cracked grain for high moisture grain to increase dry matter in the ration," Bucher said.

Using one of the Co-op's forage extender feeds may also be an option. Contact Bucher for information on usage of specific forage extender feeds.

LaPorte County Co-op is a

member of the Countrymark Cooperative System. Countrymark Co-op is a major, federated wholesale agricultural supply and

marketing cooperative. It is owned and controlled by its Member Co-ops, which are owned and controlled by their farmer patrons.

Anatomy of a Farmer

TOP OF HEAD — always wears a hat. It eases the pain when beating his head against the wall.

INSIDE OF HEAD — works like a computer when it comes to figuring out his profit and loss financing.

EARS — can be bent, but only by another farmer.

OUTSIDE OF HEAD — shows pride in work he does.

SHOULDERS — both broad. Left shoulder slightly lower than right so he can see where he has been and look back at his mistakes.

HANDS — right hand highly developed from daily chores he has to do. Left hand slightly underdeveloped because he crosses his fingers a lot.

KNEES — calloused from praying for rain, then re-calloused in praying for the rain to stop.

LEGS — one longer than the other, depending on which side of tractor he gets in and out of.

EYES — both are telescopic. Right eye watches the weather. Left eye watches the politicians.

NOSE — red, bruised and peeling.

MOUTH — usually smiling, no matter what.

CHIN — very prominent. It has to be because that's where he takes it all.

BELLY — it can be big or little, but who can tell when wearing bib overalls.

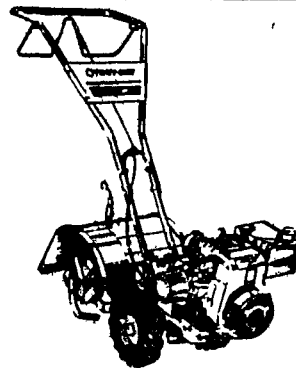
BACK — strong — to carry the burden of high costs and low profits.

SKIN — approximately ten minutes after he goes to work, skin is either dusty, wet, muddy, or cold depending on the weather.

FEET — usually strong from prolonged walks in fields looking at new crops or for cattle. Invariably fields are muddy. Big toe is enlarged — he kicks anything in sight when things go wrong.

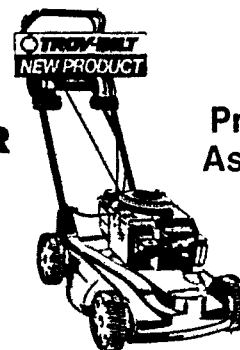
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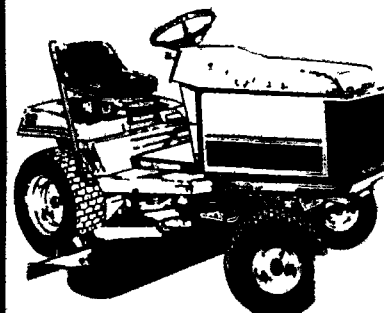
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R.F.D. by MIKE MARLAND

Panel 1: AS YOU CAN SEE, MILLIE, I REALLY NEED A NEW WASHING MACHINE. I SHOULD SAY SO!

Panel 2: UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE TWO WORDS THAT AREN'T IN GUY'S VOCABULARY...

Panel 3: "BEYOND REPAIR" I KNEW I'D FIND A USE FOR THIS OLD LAWN MOWER ENGINE!

