

Defoliation of Tomato Plants May Be Helpful

Tomato growers throughout the country are asking about the advisability of defoliating tomatoes. This article is designed to give tomato growers food for thought, it does not supply a final answer to the question "Should I defoliate my crop?"

To different groups of chemicals have been used to kill foliage of growing plants

Dessicants, such as pentachlorophenol, potassium cyanate, and cyanamide, dust kill the foliage, but usually do not cause leaves to abscise or drop from the plant. These materials often cause injury to tomato fruits contacted by the chemical, so they are not desirable for tomato defoliation.

True defoliant, such as magnesium and/or sodium chloride, tetraborate and pentaborate, normally cause leaves to drop from the plant. Because these chemicals apparently have very little toxic effect on the fruit, they are the materials commonly used in tomato defoliation.

Observations in California last year indicated that defoliation late in the season tended to increase amount of fruit picked by approximately two tons per acre, while at the same time it appeared to increase amount of shriveling, reduce amount of mold and improve fruit color.

Although experimental data on the effects of tomato defoliation are quite limited at the present time, research is in progress at various experiment stations from New York to California, so that within a few years the picture should be much more definite. In the meantime observations and experience suggest the following possibilities:

Defoliation might pay

1 If fruit is undamaged
2 If mold is reduced, due to better air movement through, and more rapid drying of, defoliated plants

3 If a labor crew late in the season, will stay on the job to

Valuable Farms Sold In Lancaster County

Two valuable farms in the Lancaster Farming area were sold at public sale last Wednesday. Henry H. Shelly of RD2, Manheim, Pa. purchased the "River Farm" which belonged to Hoffer Brothers of Elizabethtown, Pa. This farm lies along Route 441 and adjoins the Susquehanna River just north of Falmouth.

The farm contains over 107 acres and was sold at \$460 00 per acre for a total sales price of \$49,335 00.

The "Conewago Farm" owned by Hoffer Brothers lies just out side of Elizabethtown and is partly in Lancaster and partly in Dauphin County. It contains 311 acres and was sold to V. D. Leisure, a tire distributor of Harrisburg, for \$53,500 00. The new owner propose to stock it with Angus cattle. Walter K. Dupe-



JOHN SCHANTZ (left), R.D.1, Ephrata, and Glenn Porter, R.D.1, Washington Boro, Lancaster County, are shown giving an electric demonstration "Is Your Anti-

quated House Wire A Problem?" at the 34th annual 4-H Club Week, Aug. 11-14, at the Pennsylvania State University. The demonstration won a blue ribbon.

harvest defoliated plants when they will not stay to harvest non-defoliated plants

4 If ripening is hastened or if yield is increased.

Defoliation might not pay

1 If fruit is damaged, either directly or indirectly

2 If mold or fruit fly population is increased.

3 If tonnage is lost because unexpectedly favorable weather conditions continue for several weeks following defoliation. Once the plants are defoliated, photosynthesis stops and no more growth or production can occur.

Tomato growers should carefully study the pros and cons before contracting for a defoliation job. Remember that every field is different, and each case must be decided on its own merits. Never defoliate more than two weeks before canneries are expected to close for the season, and never defoliate except in fields where foliage is heavy and green and large numbers of ripe fruit are hidden from the pickers. Use defoliants rather than dessicants, and never exceed the rates recommended by the manufacturer.

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