

Working With Nature In The War Against Waste

Editor's Note: This is the third of five articles describing how the Lancaster County Soil Conservation District came into being. The other articles will be printed in following weeks.

The Key:

"Working with Nature"
Soil conservation is not a simple matter. It hinges on a vast array of complex facts and relationships that can best be understood by the concept of a Community.

In modern society we all depend heavily on our communities. We get food from the corner grocer, medical aid from the doctor, police and fire service from their respective departments and countless services from others to promote the welfare of our families. The community is tied together by inter-relationships between each member.

Plants and the soil in which they grow form a community too. Some plants depend on others for protection against the wind and sun and all depend on soil for food, water and a place to anchor their roots. The plants in turn hold the soil in place.

When man settled untouched land he became a member of the plant-soil community but too often played the role of intruder rather than helpful partner. He failed to understand the inter-relationships between plants, soil and himself.

A chilling example of such a failure can be seen in the area which Moses referred to as the "promised land" in Biblical passages. Today this land holds little promise for man's

survival. Neglect of land and water management resulted in a desert devoid of the fertility of Moses' time.

The Land-Community or Slum

What have Americans done with the virgin land they inherited a mere 350 years ago? Have we turned our land into well managed communities or a slum? Hugh Bennett, former chief of the U. S. Soil Conservation Service, reported that at one time America was wasting its soil resources at a faster rate than any race or nation, civilized or barbaric.

The Soil Conservation Service now estimates that erosion cost \$750 million each year throughout the United States. The nation has already lost an estimated three of its original nine inches of top soil.

Here in Pennsylvania during nine days in March, 1960, two million tons of soil washed down the Susquehanna River past Harrisburg. This was equivalent to a 40-acre farm going down the river every six hours.

Of course, some erosion has always taken place. It is a natural phenomenon. But when soil disappears faster than it can be replaced, it indicates that nature's community has been seriously disturbed.

Teaming up with nature is the job soil conservation workers face. It is unrealistic to consider letting our land revert back to its virgin, unmanaged condition. Our problem then, is to manage land so that it will produce man's needs and at the same time remain an undamaged, productive community.

This, in a nutshell, is the job of soil conservation districts. Their success is measured by the amount of conservation applied to the land. A district's goal is a complete conservation program on every acre of land in their county—a big order to say the least! District directors think they have the key to success in scientific land and water planning.

How can you, a landowner, join the 30,000 farmers who are now improving their soil

and water resources as district cooperators in Pennsylvania? Simply apply for assistance through your county soil conservation district. The current board of directors are Amos Funk, chairman, Millersville; Henry E. Givler, secretary, Eastbrook Road, Ronks R1; Elmer Good, Lititz R2; Elmer Sensenig, New Holland R1, and County Commissioner, Richard Witmer.

A Scientific Plan

After becoming a cooperator, the first step is to deter-

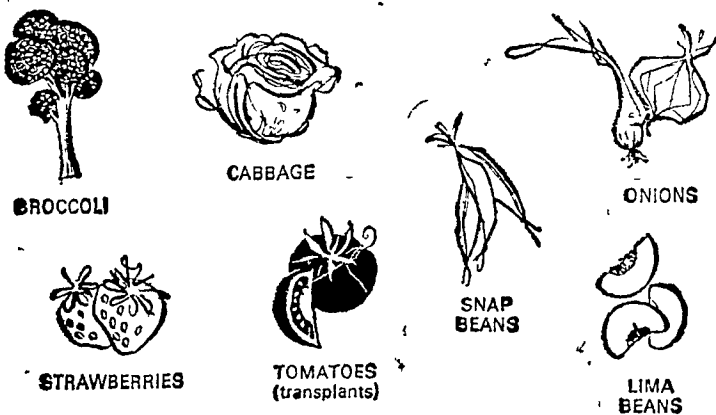
mine the types of soil present. A building contractor must check the soil types before he decides what kind of foundation he needs for a building. Similar a farmer must learn about his soil before building a sound land management program.

When a farmer joins a soil conservation district, a complete soil survey is made of his land by soil technicians. The soil scientist checks each acre of land to determine the

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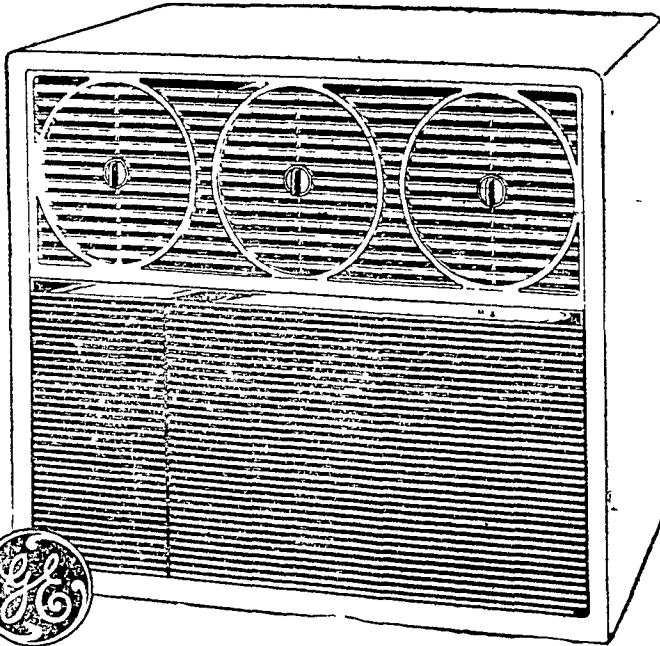
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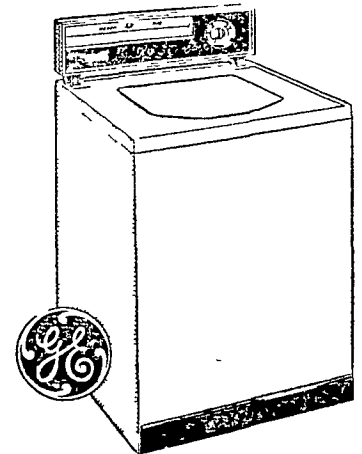
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