

MULCHING STRAWBERRIES is one of the fall season chores. Fred Funk is shown feeding salt hay through the "bale buster" which spreads the mulch over the six-acre berry crop. Strawberries, as every other crop on the Funk farm, are planted on the contour. L. F. Photo

● **Amos Funk**

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Andy said, they harvested an average of four pounds of tomatoes from each of the seven-foot vines. This year an average of six pounds is expected, and they won't be satisfied until they reach eight pounds per vine. The first picking of tomatoes was in late October, and the plants will continue to yield until about the third week in January; then they will

make way for the next crop. The Funks attribute their increased yield this year to the use of liquid fertilizer. This is fed through seepage hoses, also used for water. A mulch of peanut hulls helps retain the moisture, a vital ingredient in hothouse tomato production. Tomatoes are picked every Monday and Thursday, and are sold mostly at retail prices.

In another house, leaf lettuce grows like a green carpet. Six different plantings

were made this year, with plants spaced nine inches apart. This is not quite as thick a planting as recommended by some, Andy said, but he feels they get bigger and better plants this way. It takes eight weeks to make a lettuce crop under these conditions, and as each crop is harvested, bedding plants are started. These consist of petunias, snap dragons, mari-

golds, asters, and tomato plants, with total production amounting to 20,000 packs, each containing one dozen plants. The "lettuce house" will be seeded partially for bedding plants early in January, with production going full steam by early in February. Transplants will fill all three houses.

Most of the bedding plants will be sold at the farm; the rest will be marketed through regular wholesale and retail channels. Rudy Grove, sales manager at Funk's, helps to decide what will be produced and where it will be sold. Most of the products sold away from the farm are retailed through farmers' markets at Lancaster and Leesport, and at Root's Auction.

Production of fall and winter vegetables is strictly a sideline, Amos said; it helps provide more year-round activity and sales. Funks raise all their own plants, including 9000 tomatoes for staked field plants.

The Funks also produce their own seed for many of the varieties they raise. Celery, for example; they have found that by selecting the most desirable plants right from the trenches they can continue to upgrade the quality of their celery. It is a tedious job to produce celery seed. After being selected, the plants are potted and put into the greenhouse — this is done between now and February. It takes until next July or August to produce the seed for the next year's crop. Seed used in 1967 will be produced in 1966.

Seed is also saved for the yearly five acres of white

sweet corn the Funks grow. Amos said he has been saving seed from this variety since 1939. Each year, when some new, high-powered hybrid comes on the market, he runs comparison tests with his own variety. He has yet to find a new one that will mature as early as his. "And that extra two weeks' jump on the market is worth a lot," he said.

For the past six to eight years he has been following the same procedure with sugar peas. The first year he selected seed from about 25 plants which seemed resistant to "yellowing," a condition which chronically affects sugar pea vines. The following year, he selected seed from the six most promising plants of the second generation. Thus selecting from the best to get the best is an ever-continuing process.

The Funk farm wasn't always noted for its vegetables and plants. Originally, Amos' father and grandfather operated it as a dairy. In the early 1930's, they gradually started raising asparagus, and eventually quit dairying altogether. Amos worked for his father until 1950, when he bought the 82-acre home farm himself. It was entirely in vegetable production by that time. Another 89 acres was added in the Marticville area to raise black raspberry plants in relative isolation; vegetable crops were added later. Then in 1960, he rented another 71 acres near the home farm for red raspberry production. In 1965, he bought that acreage also. The Funk farms now total 242

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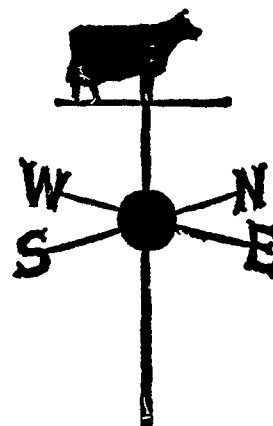
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