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Foam Protects Plants From Early Frost

A new product that resembles shaving cream when applied may help home gardeners and commercial vegetable growers protect their plants against damage from early fall frost, says David Patterson, horticulturist at Longwood Gardens, Pa.

Speaking at the third annual Delaware Turfgrass Conference at the University of Delaware, Patterson pointed out that a pro-

tein, nonplastic foam (Agri foam) has been developed to protect plants from short periods of cold weather.

"Growers are often confronted with an early frost in late September or early October, which is followed by several weeks of frost-free weather," he explained. "If we can protect the plants from this early frost, our growing season could be extended substantially."

Patterson used the foam for the first time last fall. Using 200 gallons of material, he covered

half an acre of chrysanthemums with a two inch layer of foam.

To apply the material, he mixed five gallons of the foaming agent with 100 gallons of water. It was then added and the foam was produced by forcing the material through a hose and nozzle under 40 pounds per square inch pressure.

The foam will protect plants against most frost, pointed out Patterson in Canada where the product was developed, researchers have measured the temperature under the foam at 38 degrees Fahrenheit when the temperature above the foam was 23 degrees.

There are no problems with residue with this foam, said Patterson. The material will protect plants approximately 18 hours before it starts to disintegrate; then a fine spray of water will wash away the remaining foam.

Future plans call for manufacturing the foam in an aerosol for home garden use.

Besides stripping tobacco and doing the livestock and poultry chores, the winter months are a good time to get the farm machinery in good repair. I realize the weather doesn't make us feel like spring farm work but in another 6 to 8 weeks there could be some field action. Machinery dealers will appreciate the work now in order to avoid the spring rush when the weather opens up. Machinery kept in good condition will last longer and not break down when it is badly needed in the field.

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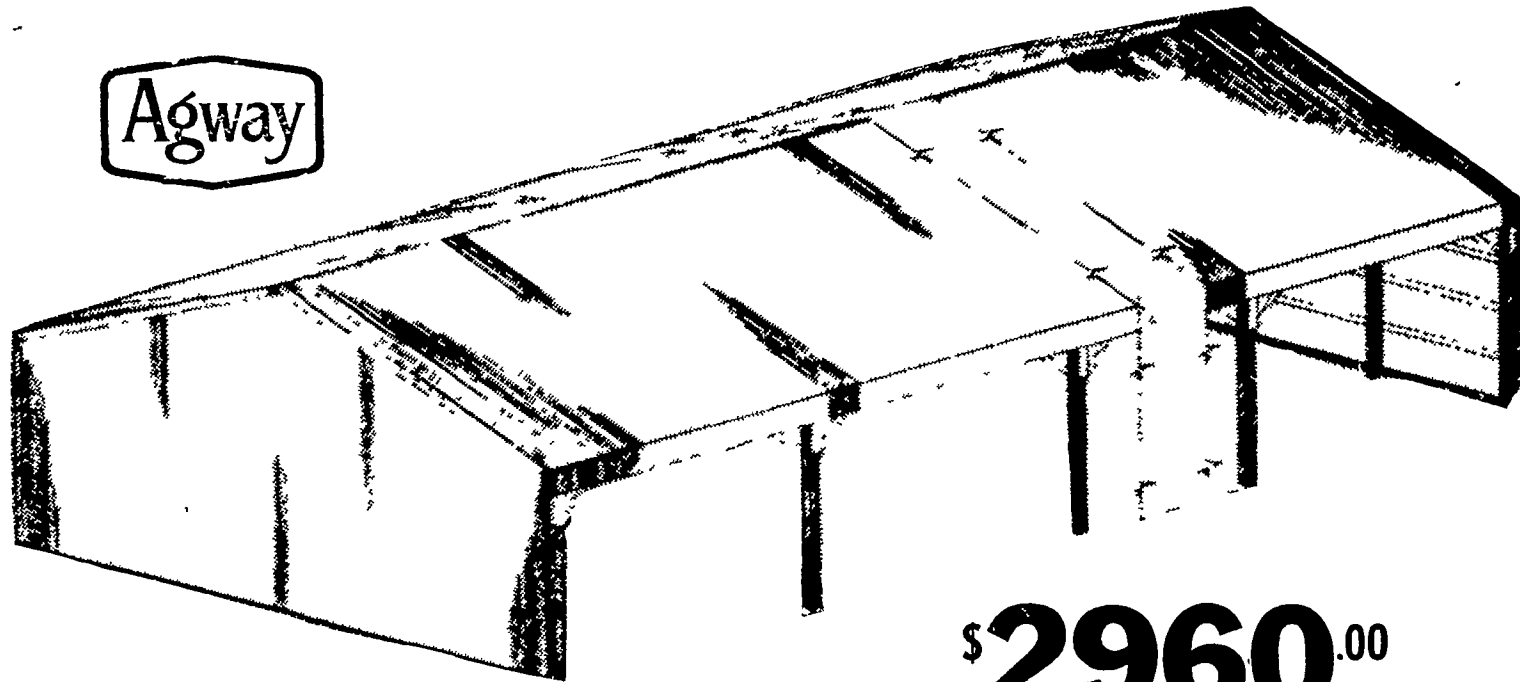
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