

# Plant Genetics -- A New Look

By now, many or most local farmers know that the Southern Corn Blight appears to have centered primarily in a few varieties of corn with common characteristics that apparently make them particularly prone to the blight.

In the future, it now appears almost certain that work in the seed corn industry will be toward replacing these susceptible varieties as fast as possible with resistant varieties.

While being concerned about adopting a resistant variety, particularly if they have corn with the blight this year, farmers should not be hasty to condemn seed firms which have the non-resistant varieties.

It should be remembered that almost no one in this area had ever heard of Southern Leaf Blight until a few weeks ago. It is a new blight strain. It caught everyone by surprise.

The work of the various seed firms in breeding more vigorous hybrid corn varieties over the past many years have helped make the large present-day corn yields possible. Along the way, many desirable plant characteristics have been bred into the corn and undesirable traits, as well as diseases, crossed out.

When something new like the present blight comes along it can catch the corn breeders temporarily by surprise, but now they're already working hard to breed this new threat to corn out of existence. They will succeed.

Meantime, the corn breeders need our patience and encouragement.

Ultimately, the blight may help to make us all a little more aware of the importance of plant genetics in determining the success of our farm operations.

# On Overcoming the Blight

Farmers in the next several weeks should stay very alert to the economic implications of the Southern Corn Blight.

If any one farm crop could be called a basic or staple crop, it is corn. At this point, the fall-out from the changed corn situation as a result of the corn blight has, or soon will, hit just about every type of farm operation.

While the overall impact, we believe, has been detrimental to farming, it should not be assumed that all farmers are sharing equally in the loss or even that all farmers are suffering. As usual when there is a shortage of a product, the farmer who is lucky enough to have a bumper crop or a large quantity of the product in storage will actually benefit, perhaps substantially.

The price of corn is very high for this time of year and the indications are that the prices will stay higher than usual for some time to come, barring unexpected good news about the amount of crop loss from the blight.

### Impact Is Uneven

The impact of the higher corn prices will be favorable for farmers who have corn to sell or who have enough on hand that they don't have to buy it. The farmers with corn will reap the benefit of the higher prices directly through sales of corn or through a competitive advantage over farmers who have to buy the higher-priced corn.

Suffering directly from the new high corn prices will be all those farmers, probably the majority of farmers, who have to buy corn directly or indirectly in feed.

Because corn is such a basic element in feed, the expected corn shortage has brought on concern about an overall national feed shortage. This has dragged up the price of nearly all the grains that go into feeds.

Awareness of this new feed situation will be vitally important for those farmers—such as broiler and egg, swine and beef producers—who buy large quantities of feed. For most such producers, commercial feed is the primary cost of production. Any substantial increase in feed costs is immediately reflected in overall operating cost increases.

Such operating cost increases mean the

farmer can no longer make the same profit on last year's prices. If prices don't go up accordingly, the producer's profits could be squeezed severely.

Will prices of farm products go up? Generally, probably yes. But it is highly uncertain if the price increases will offset cost increases.

The impact in this direction may be very irregular. With some products, prices may go up faster than costs, while in other areas costs may go up faster. It is important that the individual farmer be alert to how the situation develops in relation to his own operation so as to be better prepared to make the right moves to maximize profits or minimize losses.

(It should be noted that proposals have been made by the railroads to increase freight rates. Some local farm authorities have indicated such increases could exert considerable additional upward pressure on feed prices.)

### Just How Serious?

The big unanswered question for everyone is just how serious the corn blight really is.

Most reports indicate a national loss not exceeding 5 to 10 per cent. While this would amount to a huge amount of corn—nearly a quarter to a half billion bushels—it would not be an insurmountable loss. As Max Smith, Lancaster County agricultural agent, told some farmers this week, "A lot of farmers lose more than that each year (from various diseases, insects and poor management practices) and never even know it."

County extension officials also said they believe the county crop suffered much greater losses during the past drought than is indicated so far from the blight.

It was noted, however, that additional blight losses could occur this month, particularly to the later maturing corn and particularly if the weather is rainy and humid. Farmers have been advised to keep a close watch on their corn crop and, if the blight seems to be doing major damage to try to harvest it for corn silage at the earliest possible time.

### Some Good Crops

More than 25 per cent of the Lancaster County corn crop is harvested as silage and the silage harvest is already underway. Many farmers apparently will be able to complete the silage harvest with little or no blight loss. (See Max Smith's column for advice on using silage preservative.)

And happily, reports indicate that the wet season has produced some outstanding corn crops on record-high acreage plantings, indicating that perhaps in Lancaster County, at least most farmers should still be optimistic, despite negative reports about the blight and the legitimate concern about it.

Nationally, the federal government has more than enough grain in storage to make up a 5 to 10 per cent loss. A loss of this level apparently would mean higher grain

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# NOW IS THE TIME . . .

By Max Smith  
Lancaster County Agent



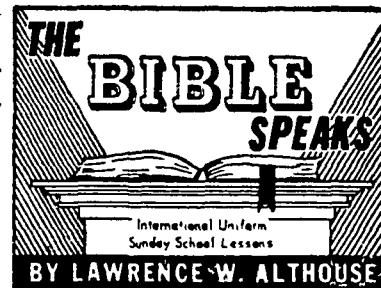
### To Practice Safety In Corn Harvesting

Corn is one of the major farm crops and has grown in importance in the past decade. In all cases mechanical equipment plays a very important part in this process and all growers are urged to stress safety to all workers. The corn picker has injured more people than any other piece of corn equipment in recent years. In most cases it was because of the operator not following the safety directions of the manufacturer by cleaning or making some adjustment without stopping the machine. Use all safety suggestions at all times and urge all farm workers to be careful.

### To Ensilage Infected Corn

It seems that the local corn crop is infected with both the Yellow Leaf Blight and the Southern Leaf Blight. The latter

one seems to be more severe and is causing more rapid drying of the plant, and in some cases the rotting of part of the ear. At the present time there is no evidence of any hazard to animals from corn infested with either disease. If weather conditions favor (wet and humid) the additional development of the Southern Leaf Blight to the point where a large percentage of the ear is rotten, then there may be some question as to its keeping qualities. Livestock authorities have suggested that the use of some large preservative, such as Kylage or Sodium Meta-bisulphite will help the fermentation processes, keep down mold development in the silo, and reduce the danger of poisonous gases. These materials have been recommended for grass silage in the past.



## THE PEACEMAKER

Lesson for September 6, 1970

Background Scripture: Genesis 26; Matthew 5:9; James 4:1-3  
Devotional Reading: Romans 12:14-21.

**WANTED: Peacemakers like Isaac.**  
**REWARD: Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God.**

If God were in the habit of running classified advertisements in this newspaper, the one above might well be among them. The world certainly needs peacemakers like Isaac today.

What's so special about Isaac? Let's review what we know about him. He was the son of Abraham and the father of Jacob and Esau. A famine was rising in the land and God instructed him to live in the valley of Ghar. The people who lived there, the Philistines, welcomed him at first, but when Isaac became quite prosperous, they forced him to leave.

So Isaac moved out into a more barren area and dug a well. As soon as the well was dug, the Philistines decided it was on their property. So Isaac dug another well and this one was also claimed by others. But Isaac moved on and dug another well, and no one bothered him about this one.

### Another well!

The situation I've just described had all the makings of a war. Isaac's Philistine neighbors were jealous and envious of his prosperity. They became greedy, coveting something for which they had not labored. And this is still the source of so much hostility and tension in the world today, the seeds from which are spawned great and bloody conflicts.

Isaac was a peacemaker. He worked miracles in human relationships. What was his secret? He was no diplomatic genius, so

diplomacy is not the answer. He had no great army, so no one was afraid of his military might. What then made him a man of peace?

### Saving "face", losing peace

The key, I believe, is in the fact that, unlike most men, Isaac was not handicapped by an inflexible pride. He was not a coward and would not back down upon his principles. Had the Philistines tried to take away his right to worship God they would have learned that quickly enough. But he was a man who could compromise on non-essentials. He would fight, but what he fought for had to be worth fighting for. He would not fight for the sake of his pride.

How many wars have begun and continued simply because nations have taken stands on trivial matters and then felt compelled to fight for the sake of "saving face"? A case in point is the year 1917, the most costly year in the First World War. After both sides had lost some 900,000 casualties in the carnage of the Battle of the Somme, Germany and the Central Powers put out peace feelers for a negotiated peace. Britain and France, however, were committed to a policy of "unconditional surrender" and, instead of responding to the German peace efforts, a green light was given to British General Haig for the Flanders campaign. In five months, Haig sacrificed 400,000 British troops in an inflexible plan that at best gained an advance of 9,000 yards. By then, a negotiated peace was impossible!

### The cost of honor

After the Armistice the Allies, still committed to their "unconditional surrender," excluded both Germany and Russia from the peace table at Versailles and a treaty was signed that lasted only twenty years when Hitler used this unjust treaty as the means to rally a bitter Germany behind him. George Kennan, former ambassador to Russia, tells us: "A stable postwar arrangement . . . had been rendered impossible before the war ever came to an end . . . by the principle of unconditional surrender."

Isaac, however, dug three wells and gave up the first two because he did not feel they were worth fighting over. That's what made him a peacemaker.

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