

Evaluate Corn Practices Now

Farmers are busy planting their corn and corn is a subject foremost in their minds. It is a good time to reflect on corn farming practices.

Although it may be too late to make some needed adjustments, other changes can still be made in the current crop. And changes and improvements can be planned now for next year.

The big topic in corn has been the corn blight. Farmers can follow good management practices to reduce stress on the crop, keep plant populations at a reasonable level, use resistant seed and other practices which can help slow down or prevent blight. But to a large extent, farmers are at the mercy of nature in regard to the blight at least until next year when most seed should be resistant.

But the farmer does have complete control over many other factors which can play a big role in the size of his crop. These include:

—Proper fertilization. This should be based on soil tests and some of the better farmers are even turning to tests of the plant itself during the preceding year. As the cost-squeeze continues in farming, the farmer can no longer afford to use fertilizer he doesn't need, or not to use fertilizer he does need. Only soil tests can reliably tell him the amount and type of fertilizer he needs.

—Quality seed. Good seed is essential for good germination and high yield. The variety should be capable of high yields and suitable for the farmer's operation and soils.

—Weed control. If weeds are allowed to grow with the corn, the moisture and nutrients which the weeds take obviously will not be available for the corn. A good weed crop virtually insures there will not be a good corn crop. Cultivation is still widely used, but growing numbers of corn producers find that herbicides do the job both better and cheaper.

These three — fertilization, seed and weed control — are fundamental in achieving a good corn crop. Reports from local farmers, educators and agri-businessmen indicate failure in each of these areas can easily cost the farmer 10 to 25 bushels per acre of corn, depending on the degree of the failure. Failure in all three can be disastrous, particularly if it is allowed to occur year after year.

While the average corn yield, we are informed, is in the area of 80 to 90 bushels per acre, our reports indicate the local

farmer with rich and relatively level land so common in this area should not be satisfied with anything less than 100 bushels and his goal should be at least 125 bushels.

Average yields of 125 to 150 bushels, we are informed, are not too much to expect on the better, level land. This type of yield, however, is possible only when the farmer has mastered the basics, when he uses good seed in ground which is properly fertilized and in which weeds are well controlled.

The top yields actually require that the farmer do a good job every step of the way. Little mistakes here and there cut away at the bushels per acre. Other factors which are important include:

—Pest control. This is one of the most volatile and unpredictable factors. Depending on the year and conditions, this factor can be among the most important. Insects can severely reduce crop yield. Farmers have been particularly alerted to the corn rootworm this year. Any farmer who had trouble with the rootworm last year can expect double trouble this year unless he acts to stop it.

—Plant population and plant spacing both within the rows and between the rows. Recommendations on this vary widely, depending on the capacity of the land and the experience of the person involved. The tendency in recent years has been to increase plant populations, this trend is probably related to better farming practices; as more fertilization, better weed and pest control, and other better management practices develop to take the stress off the plant, more plants can be grown per acre. A word of caution this year: unless you have blight resistant seed, ease up on plant population as insurance against the blight.

—Drought. While recent rains have eased the situation, at least temporarily, farmers in April received a reminder that relatively wet conditions for the past three growing seasons cannot be counted on. Some farmers have irrigation systems. Those who don't should take the possibility of drought into consideration in planning their overall corn management program. Possibility of drought should be considered in determining plant population, for instance, since high plant populations require high moisture levels, a high plant level field which produces best in a wet year may be hit hardest by a drought.

—Harvest at right stage. This is particularly important for silage. But it is also important for ear corn; harvesting at the right time is particularly important in reducing harvesting losses. We ran a report from Delaware last year that 15 per cent of the corn crop is left in the field "due to poor machine adjustment or operator carelessness." This field loss is particularly severe if the corn is left in the field too long and the stalks break easily and the ears fall off readily during harvest. Note that a 15 per cent loss amounts to 15 bushels per acre on a 100 bushel per acre crop. It demonstrates how the little things can make a big difference.

Many other factors go into making a top corn yield. At planting time, the seed must be spaced properly and planted at the proper depth. Fertilizer, herbicides and pesticides must be applied at the right time in the right location. Equipment must be kept in proper working condition at all times. While the weather doesn't always cooperate, the farmer must be ready to take advantage of favorable weather conditions. Farmers can add their own list.

The important thing is that the farmer understand all these factors and how they relate to his own operation. He needs to evaluate the importance of each of the factors and establish his own priorities in working toward a better corn program.

While 80 bushels per acre was a good yield a few years ago, costs have gone up and standards of living have risen. To meet rising costs and to insure his own competitive position in the local economy, the corn producer must do the job better each year.



NOW IS THE TIME . . .

By Max Smith
Lancaster County Agent

To Spray Tent Caterpillars

The webs in which these insects live will soon be appearing in crotches and limbs of trees and shrubs. Spraying should start as soon as the webs are formed because the young worms are easier to kill. Spray with either Sevin, Malathion, or Methoxychlor, two applications about a week apart are suggested. Just treat the web (or tent) area, it is not necessary to spray the entire tree. If spraying is not done, these caterpillars may defoliate most of the tree or shrub.

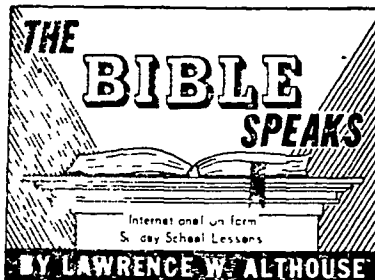
To Eliminate Termites

One of the most destructive insects to wooden buildings in this part of the country is the subterranean termite. Their activity is often discovered in the spring when the termites swarm and may be found in sunny windows of basements, attics, and other places. The worker termite is seldom seen because

it lives in the soil and stays under cover. Termites work in the wooden structure of buildings and destroy them. A new Penn State Circular, #550 on Termites, is available from the Extension Office.

To Consider Soybeans

Everything points to a banner soybean year. Exports have risen, domestic use has increased, and there is a drop in carry-over beans from last year. It is still questionable if soybeans can match corn for total feed nutrients per acre, or total cash return, but if a farmer is going to grow soybeans, we suggest that he adopt the practices which will increase yields. Soil testing is the place to start, then select an adapted high-yielding variety, place fertilizer separate from the beans, and use a recommended herbicide for weed control. The 1971 Agronomy Guide gives additional details.



WHICH WAY ARE WE HEADED?

Lesson for May 9, 1971

Background Scripture: Hosea 11, 41-9;
7:5-10; 8:4-8
Devotional Reading: Hosea 6:1-6

It took Leonardo DaVinci two years to paint his great masterpiece, "The Last Supper." One of the reasons it took him so long was his painstaking attention to details. This was particularly true in his selection of men to serve as models for Christ and the twelve apostles. Sometimes he searched for many days before he found precisely the face he wanted.



Rev. Althouse Two faces: one man

After a long search, he found a young man who seemed quite suitable to sit for the character of Jesus. The faces of each of the twelve were painted in turn. The last of these was to be Judas. For a while he searched without success in finding the face he wanted. He was looking for a man who would look the part of a cheat and betrayer. These character flaws had to be evident in his face.

After a time, he found a man who seemed to be precisely what he wanted. Evil was etched in the model's face. Dissipation showed in his eyes. So the artist hired the man. He would make an excellent Judas.

When the face of Judas was completed and the sittings were over, the man broke down and sobbed. Turning to the astonished artist, he said: "Two years ago I was the young man who sat for the face of our Lord Jesus. Since that time I have lived a life of sin and corruption and it has brought me now to the place where I can be the Judas in this picture."

The power to corrode

The prophet Hosea had seen this kind of decay, first in his own wife and, then, in his nation. Presumably, she had left him to live in adultery with another man. In time, it seems, she probably became a prostitute, going from man to man. As her moral life corroded from within, her physical body within and her whole life began to show the results. It appears that she finally fell so low that she was no longer attractive enough to ply her trade and when Hosea comes to bring her home, he must first buy her out of slavery. It must have seemed to him that she was no longer the same woman. Sin had done its work with her, too.

This, Hosea observed, was also the case with the nation of Israel. Her moral decay began in allurement to the idolatrous practices of Israel's neighbors. Just as Gomer had been united in marriage to Hosea, so the people of Israel had a similar bond, a covenant. And, just as Gomer had broken her marriage relationship to Hosea by infidelity, so Israel was an adulteress, having broken her covenant with the Lord and turned to other gods. Like Gomer, she had sold her priceless heritage for the pleasures of self-indulgence.

A thing of wood

Hosea pointed to some of the obvious signs of Israel's moral decay: there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bonds and murder follows murder. Are not those signs as evident today? Are we not plagued with violence, profanity, dishonesty, and sexual decay?

The prophet ridiculed the practice of worshipping idols: imagine worshipping something you've made with your own hands! No wonder the moral level is so low when worship is that crude. Today we do not practice that kind of idolry. Yet, do we not make things with our hands and then worship them? Don't we let man-made things take over and dominate our lives?

The young man who had sat for DaVinci was headed in the wrong direction. Which way are we headed today?

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Note of Thanks

Editor, Lancaster Farming:

We wish to acknowledge the thoughtfulness of our relatives, neighbors and friends since the sudden death of our beloved husband and father. Their support in many kindnesses of cards, flowers, generous donations toward Don's and Ginny's travel expenses and the contributions to the church missionary program as a memorial. Also, we heartily thank all for the voluntary assistance with the farm work and home work. This will always be remembered.

Mrs. Helen Wivell
and Family

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