

Becky Fry mixes Landscaping, Antiques, Housekeeping

Fry Family, Examples of Ecology in Motion

April is the time of year when our thoughts are possessed with planting all kinds of vegetation from trees and shrubs to vegetable and flower gardens and farm crops.

Ecology is the concern now of rural as well as urban citizens. If every property owner would plant at least one tree this spring, just think how much could be accomplished to hold our soil and conserve water as well as improve the air we breathe.

Probably the fastest growing trees are hybrid poplars. They are versatile in that they are used for landscaping, shade, wind-breaks, screens, timber and quick reforestation and reclamation. You can expect from five to eight feet of growth yearly from them. They will provide shade and screen in three or four years and timber in ten to fifteen years. Being resistant to storm, ice, diseases and insect damage, they are easy to grow.

Pioneers in the hybrid poplar nursery business are Miles W. Fry and Son (Morton) of Ephrata RD3, at Frysville.

Most of their farm is in Ephrata Township but part is in East Earl and part in Cocalico Township.

Miles started buying hybrid poplars from Northeastern Forest Service who developed them for reforestation and reclamation. He and Morton started in a small way in 1955.

Both worked as a team to develop the business. They have been very successful. There have been others who tried it but failed. They have been growing them commercially ten years but their sales have skyrocketed in the last seven or eight years. Last year they sold about 100,000 each of unrooted cuttings and trees.

They sell to home owners for landscaping and screening, landholding companies for reforestation, garden centers for home owners, landscape contractors to plant on industrial

sites and home sites and to highway subdivisions for screening and on medial strips.

They have sold their trees not only all over the United States but also to many foreign countries. A tractor trailer load of trees goes out daily this time of year. A trucker with three trailers hauls them away, one being loaded while the others are in transit.

This is a family enterprise. Mrs. Miles (Barbara) Fry handles the mail orders and has her office in their home. Mrs. Morton S. (Rebecca) Fry labels the trees for parcel post shipment and recently a few for airmail shipment. She also takes telephone messages.

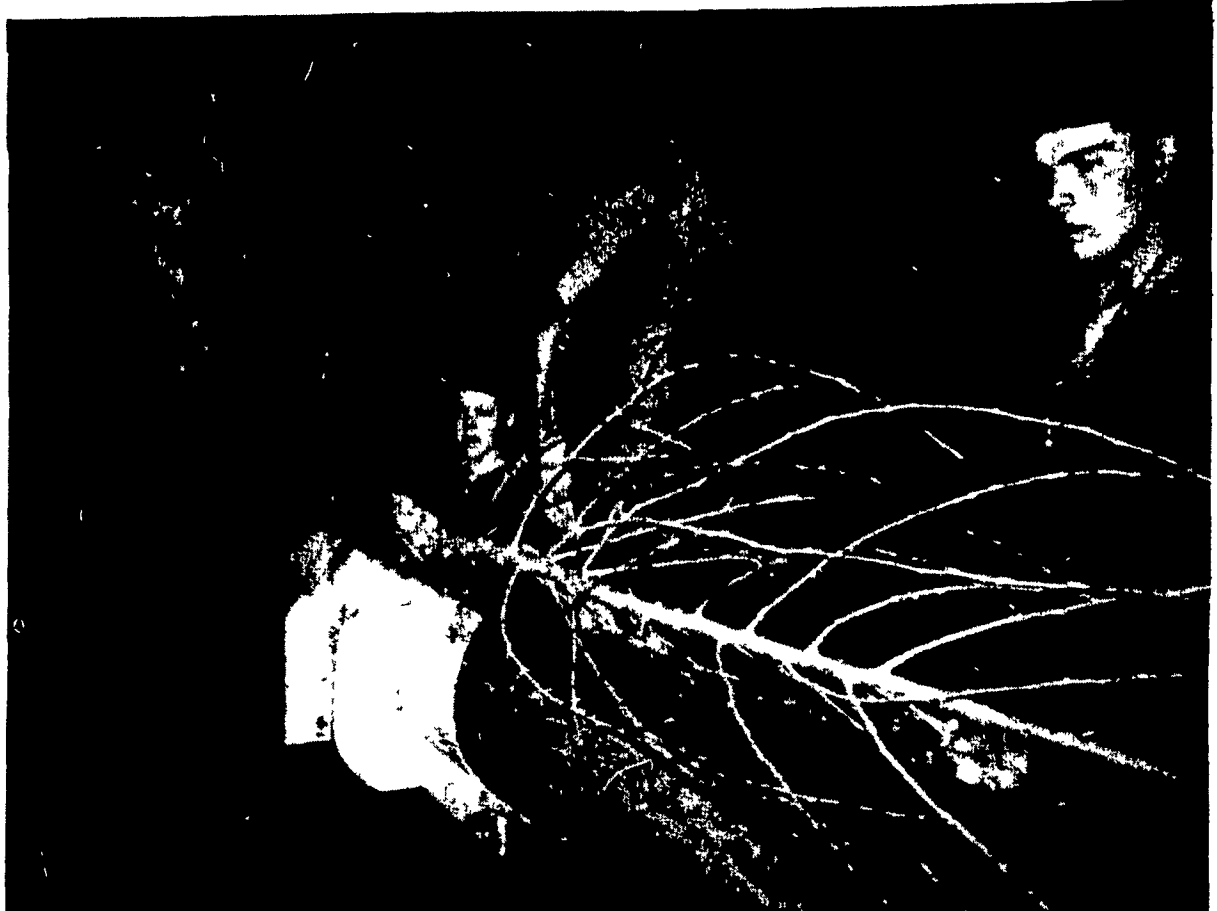
They have five full time men employed and from 10 to 15 employed from November till Memorial Day. They also have a full time salesman and a part time secretary who works three and a half to four days a week. She processes wholesale orders, handles invoicing and payrolls. Her office is in Morton's home.

Frys put bare rooted dormant trees in their temperature and humidity controlled cold storage room in early winter and take cuttings in January, which are put in cold storage. Some of the January cuttings are sold in the fall of the same year, some the next spring, some that fall, and some the third year.

First year trees are from four to seven feet tall, second year trees 10 to 14 feet and a three year old tree has a two to three inch caliber.

Frys have designed and made much of their own equipment to handle their trees. They made digging equipment, a two row planter equipment and a balling machine.

The soil for balling is stored in a shed for winter use. It is mixed outside and conveyed to a hopper in the balling room where it is piped to the balling machine. After the tree is balled and wrapped in burlap and plastic, it



Employees of Miles W. Fry and Son, for shipping. Ephrata RD3, balling a hybrid poplar tree



Mr. and Mrs. Morton S. Fry and son Simon pause in one of their greenhouses of crown vetch.

have twelve peat pots in a plastic tray and have about 8,500 dozen pots or plants in each greenhouse.

Frys sell the pots when the plants have parallel leaves. Some plants take root along the isles on the ground in the greenhouses so they keep white rabbits in there to eat the vetch.

The greenhouses have thermostatically controlled heating and cooling equipment as well as controlled humidity. They have an insecticide control system connected to a watering system.

Fungus is a major problem in growing crown vetch in greenhouses.

Frys are shipping poplar trees and crown vetch now and will be until the end of May. Some crown vetch is also sold in June.

Frys grow 70 acres of crown vetch on rented ground in Berks County. This is used for seed production.

Frys finish about 150 head of beef cattle a year. They have about 85 head now, some of which are ready to market. They sell

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is sent to the packing room for parcel post processing or set outside for truck pick up.

Frys have extended their nursery business to include evergreens, foundation plantings, ornamentals and shrubs.

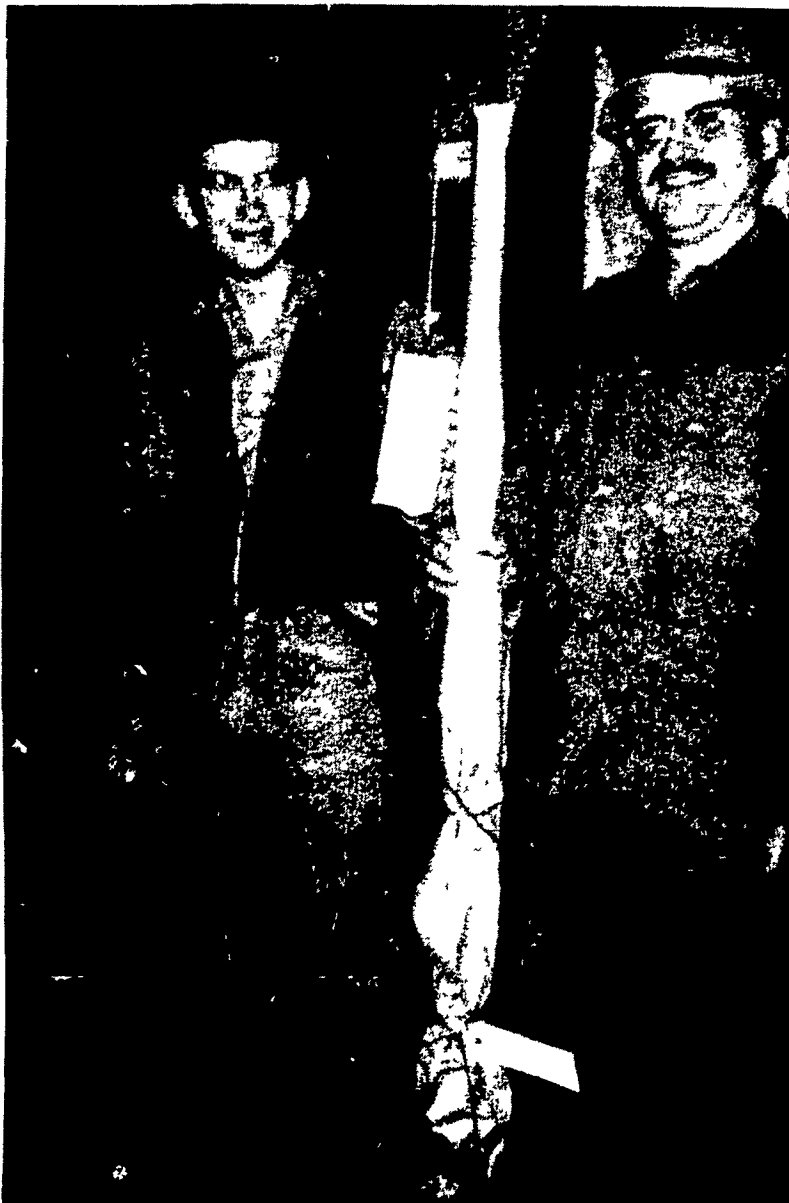
They also raise crown vetch, which is shipped all over the United States. Crown vetch is an excellent, fast growing, inexpensive ground cover with pink, white or lavender blooms. It is used extensively on steep banks such as along highway cutouts and for industrial and home needs.

It is a winter-hardy, drought-resistant ground cover that

improves the soil, chokes out weeds and never needs maintenance or mowing.

They have fourteen acres of crown vetch on their home farm which they dig and reseed. They have been shipping large quantities of bare root plants in crates for 10 years and started shipping smaller quantities in cardboard tubes within the last six weeks.

Frys were the first to grow potted vetch in greenhouses. This is their sixth year to grow it this way. They built two large greenhouses in 1970. Before that they rented greenhouses. They seed them twice a year. They



Morton Fry and one of his employees hold a hybrid poplar tree which is wrapped and labeled for air or parcel post shipment.

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