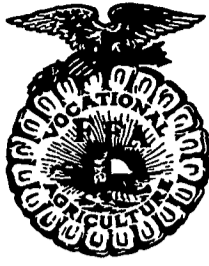


**From Local Ag Teachers:**



# Thoughts in Passing



Editor's Note: The article this week was prepared by Michael J. Burton, Young Farmer Instructor at Penn Manor High School, Millersville.

**Alfalfa, A Second Rate Crop?**  
Alfalfa has long been a neglected crop in Pennsylvania. It has taken second place to corn

in research and, consequently, on-farm management.

Field trials and demonstration plots have been non-existent for alfalfa or other hay crops. On the other hand, research field trials and demonstration plots have long been used to develop and promote new corn management practices such as higher populations, chemical weed control, better fertilization, etc., which have doubled corn yields over the past 30 years nationally.

Meanwhile, hay yields have virtually been at a standstill when compared to corn.

This gap in advancement of yields has generally followed a gap in research and demonstration plots. Government, industry, and Universities have done mountains of research with



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corn, while doing "just enough" to get by on hay crops.

But even worse is the fact that vo-ag teachers, county agents, and other personnel working to educate farmers have not promoted good management

practices or conducted field trials with hay crops as they have done with corn. The one-acre corn contest, five-acre corn contest, local Young Farmer corn contests and others have done an excellent job promoting new corn management practices.

The next point brought out by many people is the fact that alfalfa won't return as much as corn so why the fuss. But using last winters prices of \$1.30 per bushel for corn and \$50 for hay, it is quite easy to refute that argument. With a yield of 150 bushels for corn you gross \$195 per acre. Costs come to about \$95 per acre, leaving \$100 profit.

Alfalfa should yield about six tons per acre, or gross \$300 per acre. Your costs will come to about \$120 per acre, leaving a profit of \$180. If you can raise your yield to eight tons per acre your profit goes up to \$280 per acre after costs.

These figures are estimates at best, but they do reflect the potential of alfalfa when compared to corn.

With this type of earning potential available to the farmer, he should evaluate his farming program and see how hay would fit in The Pennsylvania Young Farmer's Association, in cooperation with Penn State, is conducting a much needed farm research program on hay crops and affords the farmer a chance to evaluate his hay crop program while helping complete the University to farm research cycle that doubled corn yields.

Anyone for 12 ton hay yields? Anyone interested in participating in this program contact their vo-ag instructor for more information.

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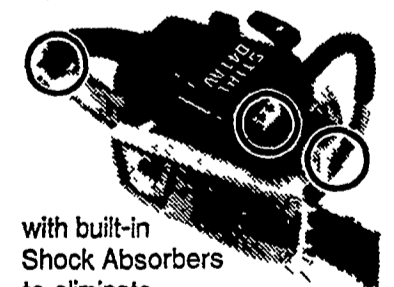


### Vine Crops Need Rich Soil

Such vine crops as cucumbers, squash, pumpkins and muskmelons, do best on a rich loam soil containing plenty of organic matter, say extension vegetable specialists at Pennsylvania State University. Vine crops also need plenty of fertilizer and insect control. If irrigation is needed, supply it during the day. For further information about vine crops, contact your county agent.

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