

Corn Growers Group Seeks New Members

Two dollars doesn't buy much these days. But if you're a corn grower, you can still get a bargain by lunking down two bucks for membership in the Pennsylvania Master Corn Growers Association according to Dr. Joseph McGahen, a Penn State extension agronomist and executive secretary of the MCGA.

"We're just a fledgeling organization, but we grew out of the Pennsylvania Five Acre Corn Club, which has been around since the late 'forties," McGahen told Lancaster Farming on Monday at the Farm Show. Conference Room C in the Farm Show Building was ever so full as it was this year for the announcement of the Five Acre Corn Club winners. And this year, for the first time, the state's

highest agriculture official, Secretary of Agriculture James McHale, presented the awards to the winners. McGahen attributed much of the added interest in this year's contest to the fact that the corn growers are now organized into the Commonwealth's only producer group seeking an active role in corn production research and legislation.

According to McGahen, the association has four major objectives. These are to:

1. Sponsor an annual Pennsylvania Corn Growers Conference.
2. Keep members informed about new developments in corn production, storage, utilization and marketing with newsletters and special reports.
3. Encourage corn grower

meetings and other activities.

4. Encourage the correlation of Penn State corn research and the research efforts of private companies engaged in corn production research.

The association's main activity will continue to be the Five Acre Corn Club, McGahen pointed out. "But we also want to get farmer input into corn production education and research. If the organization ever became strong enough, we could even fund our own research.

"This would be cultural research, rather than looking for new hybrids. We'd want to look for better ways of planting. We'd promote more efficient use of fertilizer and herbicides. We'd explore some of the trends we see from the records of the Five Acre Corn Club contestants."

Notable among those trends have been the increased population densities of corn planting and the use of herbicides. "When we first started the contest," McGahen said, "farmers were planting maybe 12,000 plants to the acre. The

average this year was almost 21,000 plants.

"In 1958, there was a big jump in the yields. That's the year farmers began using herbicides to control weeds in their corn crops. That's one of the most important things we've seen in corn production, and every year, we see that the farmers with the best weed control are the ones with the best corn production."

Another trend the records show, McGahen pointed out, is a shift to more continuous corn, and a change from ear corn to shelled corn. Along with population increases has come a move to narrower rows. Every year there are fewer and fewer 40-inch rows, and the category that's been growing fastest in the Corn Club records has been the 30-inch row.

While corn production has come a long way since McGahen first taught vo-ag at Lancaster County's Manheim Central High School in 1951, many growers still have a long way to go. "I get called out on 30 or 40 field problems every year," he said, "and 80 or 90 percent of the problems I see wouldn't have developed if the soil had been tested. The biggest problem I find is acidity, which just doesn't make sense to me, because limestone now is just about the cheapest input you can buy.

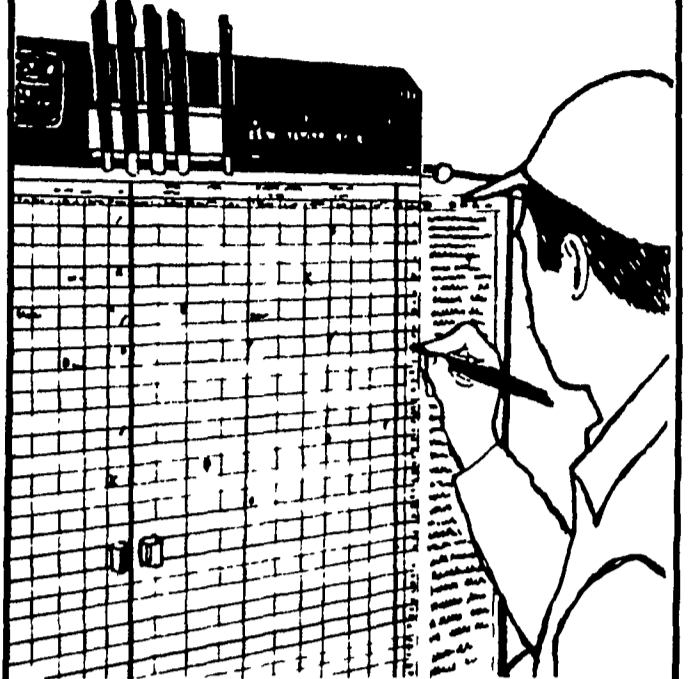
"The other big problem is improper planting. Seeds are put in too deep or too shallow. Sometimes the fertilizer is too close to the seed, or maybe it's the herbicide. These are the kinds of problems we help we can help farmers solve. These are the kinds of things we hope to keep from

becoming problems. I think it's an effort corn growers need, and I hope they support it."

More information about the Pennsylvania Master Corn Growers Association

can be had by writing to the group's secretary treasurer, Walter C. Johnson, RD1, Julian, Pa., 16844. Or, growers can become members by simply sending their \$2 to Johnson.

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Students Make Wreaths

The 7th grade Junior Agriculture Club of Garden Spot High School recently took part in a wreath making contest. One hundred and twenty-five students under the direction of Cheryl Rousseau, instructor; constructed Christmas wreaths with material donated by Stauffer's of Kissel Hill and Dean's Tree Farm in Litz.

Those students who won prizes for their creations included: 1st - Walter Jones and Lori Peters; 2nd - Sharon Liezert and Dean Horst and 3rd - Bryan Knepper.

The students were allowed to keep the wreaths as part of their Christmas decorations at home.

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