

Know Where the Activities Will Be?  
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## Johnsongrass control emphasized

# Crops & Soils Day held

By DIETER KRIEG  
LANCASTER, Pa. - Weed control, Johnsongrass eradication, no-till forage crop seeding, and updates on corn and red clover were a few of the highlights of the 17th annual Lancaster Crops and Soils Day held here at the Farm and Home Center last week.

"Poor weed control is often blamed on the weather," said Penn State's Willis McClellan, adding, however, that it is used as a cop-out sometimes.

Guy Braxton, from the Monsanto Company, noted that Johnsongrass rhizomes can grow 85 feet in seven weeks and stretch out for 300 feet at maturity.

The Crops and Soils Day began at 8:30 a.m. with displays of farm seeds, lime, fertilizers, and agricultural chemicals being available for farmers' inspection and discussion. Company representatives were on hand to answer questions. Lancaster County Extension Agent for agronomy, Arnold Lueck, began the official program an hour later by reporting briefly on Lancaster County crops.

Also discussed during the day-long meeting were red clover establishment, outlook and management; pesticide certification, corn management, and alfalfa management.

Braxton and McClellan concentrated many of their remarks on Johnsongrass control, repeatedly stressing that the noxious weed has a potential of ruining entire corn fields. Both urged farmers to tackle the problem if they have it. Furthermore, they advocated going that extra mile to make sure that the weed is being killed. That "extra mile" does not mean stronger concentrations of

weed killers, but rather the treatment of fields for an extra year or even two.

The reasoning behind the large-scale effort to bring Johnsongrass under control is because the plant is so strong in its endeavor to thrive and take over. Johnsongrass seeds, for example, can live in the soil for 10 years before they begin to germinate. The rhizomes, which can reach eight feet in length in just three weeks, are particularly active.

Braxton noted that part of the problem with Johnsongrass is that farmers can have it and not know it due to the weed's similarity to sudangrass.

Mowing Johnsongrass is no answer to the problem. The weed just simply goes to head sooner and completes its life cycle that way. It is very determined to survive, and spread, which is what makes it so difficult to bring under control.

Better control of Johnsongrass is achieved when chemicals are applied close to June 1. Earlier applications are not as ef-

fective, Braxton explained.

Concluding his remarks, Braxton advised: "Whatever program you use, don't cut corners. Don't allow the weed to go to seed. If you have the problem, please become aware of it and do something about it."

Penn State crops specialist John Baylor was also on hand for the meeting, offering farmers the latest information on the establishment and management of red clover. He noted that new varieties have been introduced and that yields have thereby improved substantially. Aside from the new varieties, management of red clover fields also plays an important role in increasing yields. "When it's treated (managed) like alfalfa, you get better production," Baylor advised. "Treat red clover like a crop and harvest it like a crop," he added.

The Penn State agronomist also advised that if a farmer has difficulties raising alfalfa, red clover could be a profitable and practical alternative. "Try it out," Baylor suggested, "and give us in Extension some feed back on how it's working for you."

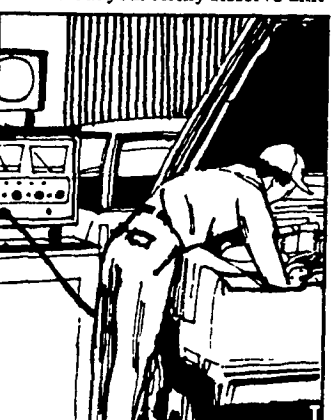
Red clover is susceptible to anthracnose, especially the southern variety, but researchers are coming up with varieties which show substantial amounts of resistance to the disease.

The predominant dark spot on the red clover scene for 1977 is the poor availability of seeds. "Seed availability of improved varieties is not too bright," Baylor concluded.

McClellan, in addressing himself to the specifics of good weed control, said that the timing of the application is the single most important factor to good results.

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