

Mexican bean beetle battle booming

BELTSVILLE, Md. — Experimental soybean plants that are resistant to Mexican bean beetles are yielding nearly as well as popular commercial varieties in field tests at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Beltsville Agricultural Research Center in Maryland.

According to Thomas Elden, research entomologist with USDA's Science and Education Administration (SEA), the new plants could eventually eliminate soybean losses to the Mexican bean beetle and still maintain yield levels and other quality traits characteristic of today's top

soybean varieties. The resistant plants could be available to growers in two to four years.

The Mexican bean beetle is a serious pest of soybeans throughout most of the mid-Atlantic and Southeastern states and parts of the Midwest. Crop yields can be reduced by as much as 25 percent. The development of high yielding, resistant soybean plants, says Elden, could head off a current geographic spread of the insect's ravages, and thus reduce the need for insecticides.

To best compare the yields of the experimental plants with commercial soybean plants, Elden kept the Mexican bean beetle out of

the Maryland field tests through chemical control. "Had the tests included the insects," says Mr. Elden, "the experimental plants would have far-outyielded the commercial plants. All present commercial varieties are highly susceptible to this pest."

The Beltsville research is part of a broad USDA program to develop insect-resistant soybean varieties suited to different farming regions. Other SEA scientists at the Soybean Research Laboratory in Stoneville, Miss., are breeding and selecting soybean plants for southern growers. Advanced breeding lines at Stoneville have excellent resistance to the Mexican bean beetle, good resistance to the soybean

looper, and moderate resistance to the corn ear-worm.

The scientists at all three locations are working with offspring of three highly resistant soybean plants discovered in South Carolina in 1968. The plants being tested at Beltsville, the eighth generation, still have strong resistance. The chemical makeup of the plants does not suit the Mexican bean beetle — causing a reduction in leaf

feeding and larval development.

"Now that we have yields comparable with top varieties," says Elden, "we will continue to cross our plants with commercial varieties that have high protein and oil content, disease resistance, and other quality factors. Some resistance will be lost in the breeding, but the progeny could still stop yield reductions by Mexican bean beetles."

FFA awards banquet held

WASHINGTON, N.J. — The tenth annual Warren Hills Future Farmers of America Parent Member Banquet was held on May 13. First year members of the FFA received the Greenhand Awards. Second year members received Chapter Farmer Awards.

Outstanding Greenhand award was presented to Robert Kerkendall. Linda Hengst received the Star Chapter Farmer Award.

The Warren Hills FFA Chapter presented 12 different proficiency awards. The ten first place awards are as follows: Poultry Production-Nancy Schnetzer; Beef Production-Don Rush; Swine Production-Raymond Kerkendall; Agriculture Mechanics-Robert Rutan; Crop Production-Robert Rutan; Placement in Agriculture Production-Mike Anema; Soil and Water Proficiency-Sam Zachar; Home and Farmstead Improvement-Nancy Schnetzer; Dairy Production-Mike Anema;

and Livestock Production-Robert Jeskey.

Also awards were given to those people who helped the chapter. They were presented with Honorary Chapter Farmer Awards. The recipients were Craig Leshner, Harry Scheiber, and Timothy Wasser.

Robert Rutan received the Scholarship Award for improving his grades most progressively throughout the year. Sheridan Ames won first place in the local six to eight minute public speaking contest. Kathy Barton won first place in the three minute public speaking contest along with Donna Reese, winner of the Creed Contest.

The highlight of the evening was when the Dekalb award was presented to Nancy Schnetzer and Sam Zachar for being outstanding seniors. Their names will be engraved on a plaque. They will receive a pin, certificate and an award from the Warren Grange. They also received a cash award of \$35 from the chapter.

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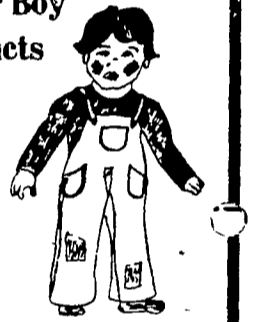
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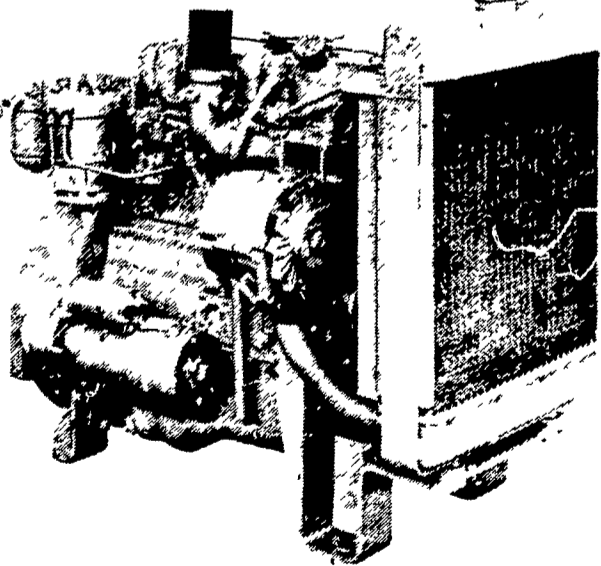
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