

# DeKalb introducing new seed corn varieties

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Staff Correspondent

DALLASTOWN — "Dig that cultivator out from under the apple tree; and if you haven't been doing any cultivating in corn, try a small block of it in the field next year," advocated Ken Miller.

Miller is the Eastern regional agronomist for DeKalb, Inc. He made the above observation during the firm's area Field Day, held September 7 at the Charles Hess farm.

This was the second consecutive year that Hess and the nationally-known seed firm teamed up to plant several acres in carefully monitored test plots. The trial areas, planted in four, eight and sixteen row sections, represented a broad scope of currently popular, and some not so popular, cultural practices.

Recommendations on returning to the almost-forgotten practice of cultivating field corn were stressed by Miller as "the one thing to remember if you don't remember anything else today."

The agronomist noted that the heavy use of herbicides, such as the well-known Atrazine, has almost put cultivation tools out of business. Now pest grasses and other weeds formerly controlled by chemical applications threaten to build up resistance to the sprays.

Citing studies done at the University of Delaware, Miller suggested that yield increases of 12 to 18 bushels of corn to the acre may be gained from just one well-timed cultivating trip.

"Does it pay?" he questioned. "It's done when the corn is fairly small, not over 18 inches tall, and does not tear out the plant root systems by going too deep, a lot of people are saying 'yes, it does pay'."

For farmers who intend to continue corn cropping using no-tillage methods, Miller



But what will happen to corn-on-the-cob?—DeKalb personnel Ed Wilson, left, and Herb Ayres examine a genetic-trait corn plant in which the seed kernels develop within the tassel. Eventually, corn stalks with "heads" of this type will probably be harvested much like fields of small grains.

also had a few suggestions for cleaning up weeds that threaten to become herbicide resistant.

Acidity levels greatly determine the success of herbicide applications; when soil acidity falls below recommended levels, grass and weed killers simply will not work. Miller noted that some no-till growers are routinely spreading a half-ton of lime per acre annually, to maintain soil acidity at peak herbicide efficiency levels.

Running two soil tests for no-tillage was also recommended by the agronomist. Acidity tests should be taken at a depth of about three inches, while fertilizer and mineral needs are most accurately sample at seven or eight inches underground.

One weed that came in for a special warning at the field day was pigweed. This pest appears to be moving north from Maryland fields in unprecedented numbers, turning up in some spots with populations as large as one hundred plants to the square foot.

A fairly new tillage tool that's won high acclaim by the researchers is the subsoiler. Miller credits the heavy-toothed implement with loosening the subsoil crust as deep as 14 to 16 inches, allowing air, moisture and tiny corn roots to penetrate to greater depths. Results from the 1977 trials at the same spot on the Hess farm showed that the

highest yields from the entire plot came from the rows where the subsoiler had been used.

"Bigger and bigger moldboard plows for corn have seen their best days," insists the agronomist. "The larger the moldboard, the greater pressure on the plow point itself. That constant pressure compacts, (Turn to Page 114)

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