# Plant screening system developed

BELTSVILLE, Md. - A new screening procedure to help plant breeders evaluate strawberries and red raspberries for rotresistance has been developed by USDA's Science and Education Administration scientists.

Plant pathologists John L. Maas and Wilson L. Smith, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, have devised a procedure for evaluating berries for

resistance to Botrytis cinerea. This fungus is the primary rot-causing organism in berries and accounts for annual multimillion dollar losses throughout the industry.

The researchers have developed a system in which berries are held for three days at 18° to 20° C. with 90 per cent humidity. These conditions are ideal for decay development, and provide a standard environment in which to

evaluate berries for Botrytis infection. Berries showing extremely low levels of rot are considered to be fruit from plants with fungus resistance.

Plant breeders heretofore have made their evaluations in the field by picking out those plants with certain desired characteristics color, leaf formation, overall appearance, etc. But Botrytis development is very erratic. Its development varies almost daily

depending on weather, temperature, humidity, and geographical location. This affects what the breeder sees and what he selects.

The new, standardized system is a refinement and sophistication of an approach developed in 1970 by the Canadian Department of Agriculture. It is expected to help plant breeders make more rapid and accurate screenings that can lead to breeding rot-free fruit.

Up to now breeders have had no refined screening techniques that would enable them to measure small differences in clonal resistance. This is necessary in order to breed for resistance by successively accumulating low levels of resistance.

Maas and Smith explain that, with some modification the technique may provide the basis for applying similar methods to other

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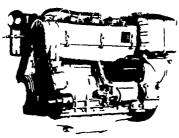
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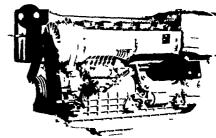
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