

# Commercial Corner

BY DON WERTMAN,  
PRESIDENT  
Pennsylvania Seedsmen  
Association

**Editors note:** In a series of articles, the President of Pennsylvania Seedsmen Association discusses the development and need for the seed industry in Pennsylvania the nation and the world. Wertman has been a part of the industry for the past fifteen years, holding various offices in the association as well as in other seed related organizations. He is General Manager of Seedway Inc. Emmaus, Penna. These

articles are written exclusively for Lancaster Farming.

The story of seed is as old as that of man himself. The author of Genesis writes: "Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed according to its kind upon the earth," and it was so.

Jesus used the story of seed on the basis for many of his parables. So it is that seed has been of tremendous import to mankind from time immemorial.

The seed industry did not develop overnight. It is the

culmination of man's instinct and intuitive over the centuries to provide himself and his family a more secure and abundant life.

The fable of Jack and the Beanstalk illustrates the desire to find a magic seed that will change our want into plenty. The search for more productive seed is an ongoing process.

Although much has been accomplished, scientists are still searching for more productive seed. Seed which can be utilized in producing food and fibre which will go a long way toward alleviating some of man's most critical problems.

Is Seed that important? Yes!

Nine tenths of the food consumed in the world emanates from the planting of seed. Without cultivated

crops which are utilized for human and animal consumption, the earth could only provide for thirty million rather than its current four plus billion inhabitants. Cultivated plants also produce many other organic substances which are utilized in our modern society.

During the centuries that we have cultivated plants, many substitute or alternate resources have been utilized in production such as;

Chemical fertilizers, artificial light, irrigation, contrived growing media, but we have never found a substitute for seed.

The first person to save a gram of seed which he hoped would grow another plant, was the first seedsman.

The practice of saving seed is ancient by any

standards. In some species we still collect and save seed without much extra manipulation.

Many can remember Grandfather selecting the finest ears of corn whose grain he would use for planting. Grandma saved melon and cucumber seed for her garden.

Meanwhile plant scientists were uncovering the secrets of heredity and plant genetics. Ways were found to increase a plants productivity by regulating reproduction. Inbreeding, crossing, isolating, were new methods used to improve existing species or create new varieties.

As practical applications were discovered for these new methods specialists were needed to implement them. These specialists have become known as seedsmen.

Specialized farming operations developed for the sole purpose of providing superior planting stock for the general agriculture.

Today there are thousands of seed farms across the country, producing not only enough seed for American farmers but for producers throughout the world.

Is the Industry needed today? More so than ever.

Scientific advances have touched most every species of plant from corn to cucumbers, cabbage to wheat, sunflower to marigolds.

We have hybridized, mutated, selected, and cross-pollinated everything in sight, resulting in the most productive seed varieties the world has ever known.

The seed industry continues to meet the challenge of science and the producer in developing techniques and practices which bring a

more reliable and productive seed to the farmer, gardener and florist. Today the industry foots a large bill for research.

Basic research but also practical research in areas of seedling vigor, seed growing and handling techniques, packaging, and ultimate utilization by the producer.

In many instances ten years of research are involved in the development and testing of a new variety.

With today's costs, millions are spent of private and public monies to further the development of new varieties and technologies.

Seedsmen have become very responsible individuals. They must plan years in advance for the single production of a given variety. Seed stocks must be built up, starting with as little as several grams of seed.

Purity and quality must be maintained, as many seeds are regulated and controlled by law.

Seedsmen face the same challenges of weather and climate as do the general farmer but with the added responsibility of sustaining the production as a living or viable product which will be used later in commercial production.

Seedsmen have invested billions in conditioning plants, laboratories, and storages so that the farmer can be assured of a dependable supply of seed.

In future articles we will discuss particular facets of the industry, including production problems of alfalfa seed, labeling requirements, government involvement, seed storage and use by the farmer.



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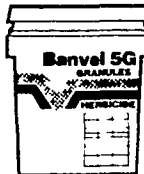
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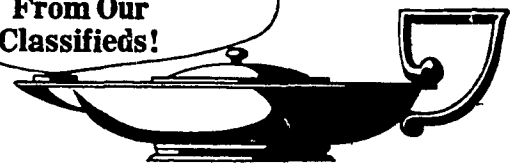
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