

Crops farmers get update on corn, tobacco, grain

BY CURT HARLER

LANCASTER — A look at last year's problems and tips on how to prevent more of the same in 1980 highlighted the Crops and Soils Day held at the Farm and Home Center.

John Yocum, Superintendent of Penn State's Southeast Field Research Laboratory, reviewed the 1979 growing season as one beset with weather problems.

There was less heat during the day and more days with rainfall although not more total rain.

Rain fell on 16 of 21 days at the end of May. So, the total amount of sunshine also was off.

Cool temperatures, frequent rain, and cloudy conditions are ideal for disease problems, Yocum told farmers.

Terming the blue mold infection "the worst disaster on tobacco since I've been here," Yocum said the problem was noted in most tobacco growing states except Wisconsin.

The problem can be identified by the stunted plants. Most will show little or no root system and will display white, sucker-like growths.

Yocum said Ferbam, while an effective preventive for blue mold, is not a cure once the problem shows up in fields.

He said a new material called Ridomil 2E, while not yet cleared for use by farmers, can be applied after blue mold shows up on the crop.

Yocum recommended farmers keep a sharp eye on tobacco beds this year for any sign of blue mold.

He suggested they start looking when plants are about the size of a dime. He said if any sign of blue mold infestation appears farmers should begin a spray program at five day intervals.

If the weather turns bad, the program should be accelerated to every three days, Yocum said.

Small grains, too, had a difficult time with diseases last year.

Yocum said the same weather which gave rise to the tobacco diseases favored problems on small grain.

He said farmers should be on the lookout for root rots which may be already in the field from fall-sown grain.

Another problem is take-all, a disease which most frequently appears in fields where wheat follows wheat in rotation or with only a year between crops.

Rust can hurt wheat or oats yields if it comes early enough.

But the number one problem in small grains is powdery mildew.

Yocum said it may pay to

use a fungicide in certain cases to combat powdery mildew.

He said preliminary Penn State research shows a chemical application may give significant return in yield to pay for the cost of the spray.

For most farmers, there is little they can do about the small grain already planted.

But farmers can do plenty to help that grain get a good start going into spring.

Yocum pointed out there is little growth on most of the small grains in the Southeastern part of the state.

The open winter this year means there probably has been great loss of fertilizer from fields.

"Most small grain crops would benefit greatly from a topdressing with nitrogen as soon as possible," Yocum said.

He said farmers should not delay until April for the topdressing but should go ahead and apply the N as soon as they can—if the ground is not frozen.

He pointed out that the sooner the fertilizer is applied, the sooner the plants can use it for tillering. And that means more plants per acre, and therefore more production.

Barley may be the one exception. Weak straw makes excessive N ap-

plication on barley a dangerous proposition.

Yocum said farmers should know their fields before going in with too much nitrogen on barley.

But he said most barley plantings probably could profit from an application of 15 to 20 pounds N per acre.

He said most small grains fields would benefit from

some lime, too. He noted small grain usually comes last in the rotation and therefore is on the tail-end as far as the liming cycle.

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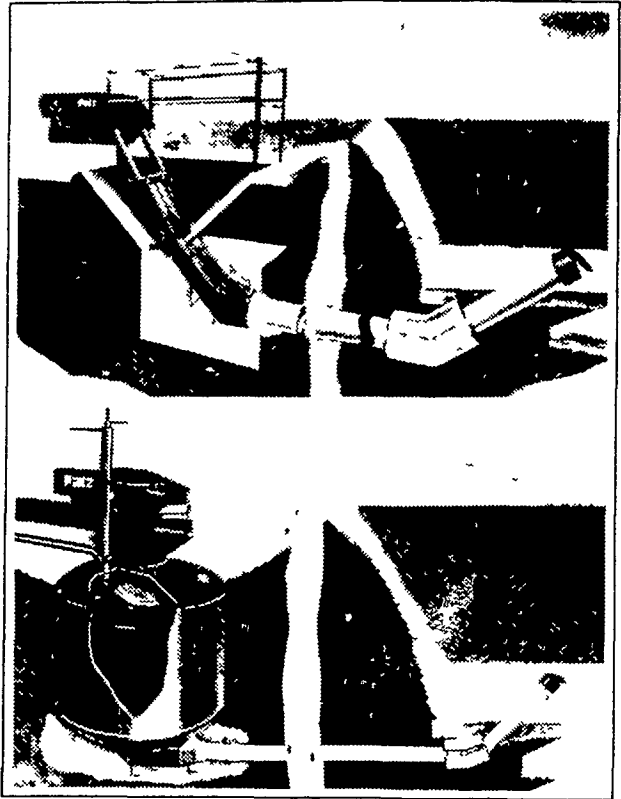


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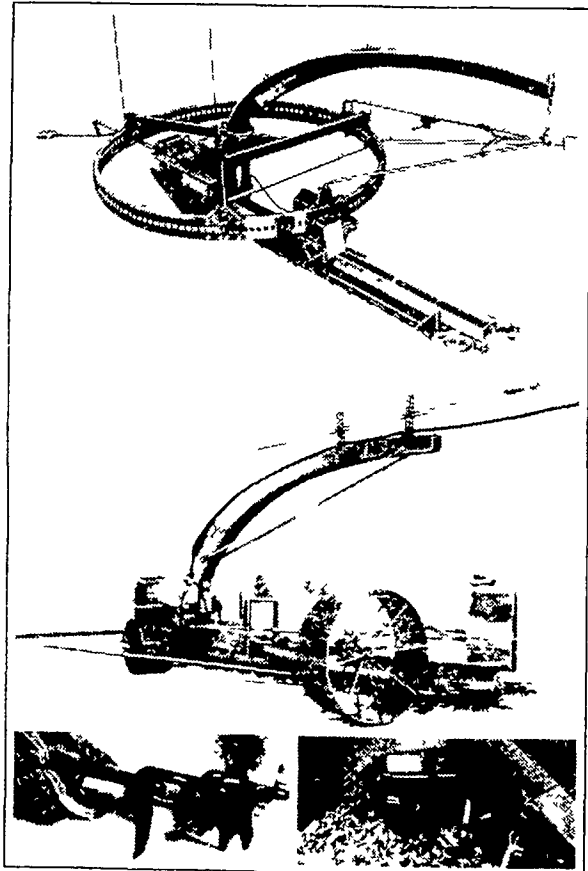


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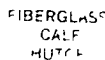
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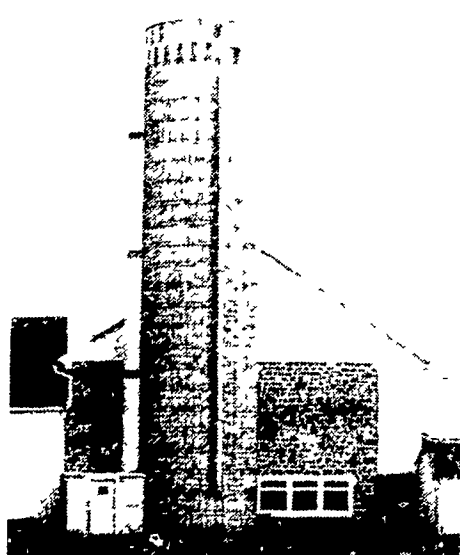
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