

Specialist offers advice on Md. fruit plantings

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — If you've got the fever to plant fruit trees around the farmstead this spring, heed these words of advice from Arthur H. Thompson, horticulture research worker at the University of Maryland in College Park.

Thompson advises against planting apricots, sweet cherries or pears in Maryland home orchards. Instead, he suggests apples, peaches and plums.

Apricots are hardy enough to survive in Maryland, but they bloom early and the flowers are often damaged by late-season frosts. Thus, they usually will not bear a good crop of fruit.

Sweet cherries, also, are often harmed by late-season spring frosts in Maryland. And when the fruit is near maturity, it is frequently subject to cracking. Birds love cherries; they can devour an entire crop in short order unless precautions are taken, such as covering the trees with netting.

Pears grow well in Maryland, but they are not recommended for most areas of the state because of the devastating bacterial disease, fireblight.

Thompson and other workers at the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station have been searching for a pear that is both high in quality and resistant to disease. The Magness pear was introduced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1960 to meet these needs. But while a good-quality pear, it is not a reliable producer.

Many varieties of apples will do well in Maryland, Thompson notes. He particularly recommends two new varieties—Gala and Spartan.

Originally from New Zealand, the Gala apple appears especially promising in Maryland variety tests. It is available only from Stark Brothers Nurseries of Louisiana, Mo., which holds the U.S. patent rights on this variety.

Thompson also recommends some of the old familiar apple varieties, such as Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, Jonathan, Stayman and Rome Beauty for Maryland conditions.

In the home garden, apples with a dwarf or semi-dwarfing rootstock are often desirable, since they take up less space and bear at an earlier age than full-sized trees.

Malling 26 is a dwarfing rootstock which causes the tree to grow only about 40 percent as large as a standard apple tree. A Malling 9 rootstock produces a tree which is even smaller. But a Malling 7 rootstock yields a considerably larger dwarf tree, about half the size of a standard tree.

Remember to plant at least two different varieties of apple for cross-pollination.

Peaches require more care than apples, since they are somewhat more sensitive to insects and disease. They need more pruning and thinning than other fruits. They bear abundantly, starting as early as the second year after planting.

Most peach tree varieties do not require cross-pollination, as apples do.

Thompson recommends several varieties of peaches for the home orchard.

Candor ripens in early July, while Redhaven ripens in late July. Sunhigh is ready to eat in early August, and Redskin follows in late August. Marpride and Marqueen ripen in early September. These latter two peaches were developed by horticulture research workers for the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station.

Plant three or more of the recommended varieties in your yard this spring, and you could be enjoying fresh peaches all summer long by 1982.

Plums are easier to grow than peaches, mainly because they do not need as much pruning and thinning. The Stanley is a European prune-type plum that does not require cross-pollination from another variety. By contrast, Methley and Santa Rosa are Japanese plums which should be planted together for cross-pollination.

Before planting fruit trees, take a soil test to determine if you need to apply lime or fertilizer. The University of Maryland offers free analysis of soil samples for Maryland residents. You can get a free soil test from your county extension office.

Fruit trees must be sprayed several times each season to assure a blemish-free, bountiful crop. For detailed information on spray programs, contact

Sorghum program participants to receive \$61 million

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Farmers who compiled with the 1979 sorghum set-aside program will receive around \$61 million in deficiency payments from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Ray Fitzgerald, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service said Monday.

The payments will be made by county ASCS offices in early April.

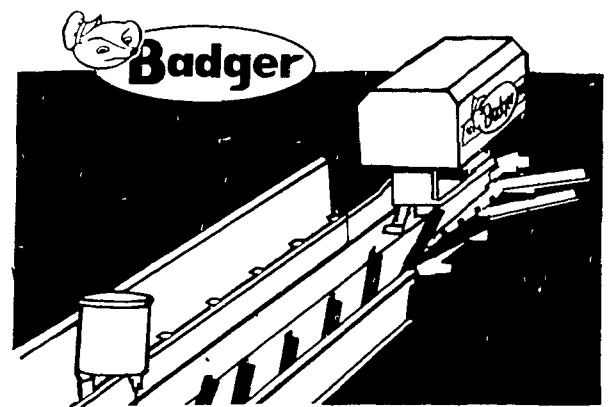
For eligible 1979 sorghum acreage, the deficiency payment rate is 13 cents per bushel, the difference between the \$2.34-per-bushel target level and the \$2.21 average market price. There will be no corn deficiency payments since the average market price of \$2.31 exceeded the corn target level of \$2.20 per bushel.

Fitzgerald also announced the final national program acreage for corn at 85.7 million acres and for sorghum at 15.9 million acres. The program allocation factors for each grain is 100 percent.

Eligible sorghum growers who have not signed applications for payment should do so as soon as possible through their local county

ASCS offices, Fitzgerald made until applications are signed and approved. Payments cannot be

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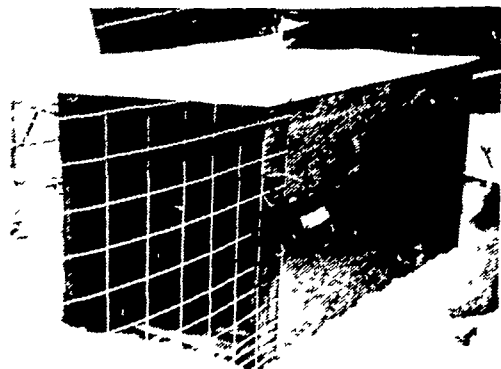
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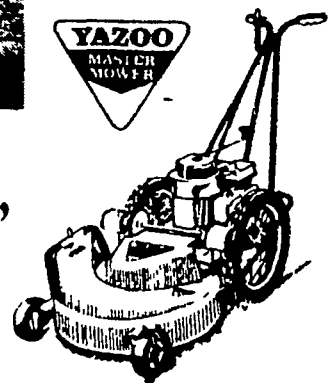
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