

## Helpful tips outlined for growing vine crops

**UNIVERSITY PARK —** Vine crops including cucumbers, muskmelons, pumpkins, squashes, and watermelons, are generally considered warm-season crops.

Most of these vine crops require soil temperatures of at least 55 degrees. However, below 60 degrees growth is slow. All vine crops are stunted by chilling temperatures, about 33-45 degrees, and are readily killed by frost, says Peter A. Ferretti, Penn State Extension vegetable crops specialist.

Vine crops can be grown on most fertile well-drained soils. Generally, the soil should be mellow and hold sufficient water for crop production and yet able to drain excessive water rapidly. Low areas surrounded by timber or by higher land on all sides should be avoided since such sites usually lack good air and water drainage and warm too slowly during spring.

All vine crops except watermelons grow best on soils with a pH of 6.2 to 6.8.

Watermelons will grow well on soils with a pH of 5.5 to 6.8. Magnesium seems to be especially important for all vine crops. If a magnesium problem exists which has not been corrected by fall-winter application, a spring application of either

dolomitic limestone or a straight magnesium carrier such as magnesium sulfate (Epsom salts) may still be beneficial for the current year's crop, especially on cucumbers and watermelons.

All vine crops except watermelons require approximately the amount of nitrogen supplied by 3½ pounds of 5-10-5 fertilizer applied per 100 square feet.

Watermelons should receive no more than the nitrogen contained in 1½ to 2 pounds of 5-10-5 fertilizer per 100 square feet.

All vine crops benefit from relatively high levels of organic matter. A cover crop in the fall-winter before planting and moderate use of manures can be very beneficial, says Ferretti.

Careful variety selection is

often one of the keys to successful production in a home garden. Select disease-tolerant varieties when practical.

Also, be sure to control stripped and spotted cucumber beetles. This is because they transmit the most common disease of cucurbits, Bacterial Wilt.

Bacterial Wilt causes a sudden wilting and collapse of plants. Good control measures include the use of hotcaps to keep beetles from chewing on the very susceptible young plants and using recommended insecticides starting the day of seeding or transplanting and continuing one week until the plants bloom, says Ferretti.

Contact your county agent for suggestions on varieties, general culture and pest control of vine crops.

## Healthy livestock can mean healthy marketing ability

**OAK BROOK, Ill. —** The development and maintenance of high standards of livestock health have made it a merchandisable concept, a marketing leader said here Friday.

C.T. 'Tad' Sanders, general manager of Livestock Marketing Association, Kansas City, Mo., said that the marketing sector has long recognized the basic fact that high standards of livestock health are essential to a profitable, healthy livestock economy.

Speaking before the feeder cattle health committee at the annual meeting of the Livestock Conservation

These principles include working with the livestock industry and appropriate livestock health agencies to "develop, uphold and maintain high standards of

Institute, Sanders pointed out that livestock seller and buyer satisfaction — in health matters as in all other aspects of marketing business' services — is the key to the business's continued success.

That is why LMA's 1500 subscribers in the U.S. and Canada subscribe to a Code of Business Standards and Practices, which includes several principles relating to livestock health, he said.

livestock health, and the disclosure of information concerning the health status of all livestock" under a market's control to its customers.

The Code also recognizes the need for humane treatment of livestock in marketing, qualified, competent and readily-available veterinary services, and clean, tidy, fully sanitary facilities and premises, Sanders pointed out.

Referring to the "current distorted focus of attention directed toward livestock warranties....sought to be imposed on every livestock purchase and sale transaction", particularly concerning livestock health, Sanders noted that "livestock of all kinds, and feeder cattle in particular, bear a health status distinguished from manufactured products."

This status "imposes high standards of health responsibility and risk," he pointed out, adding that there are many factors that can affect an animal's health.

These factors, he said, make it unreasonable to judge a living creature's performance by the same warranty standards used for inanimate objects.

## Proper pinching can increase plant bloom

**UNIVERSITY PARK —** Pinch the terminal tips of zinnias to grow more flowers. The plants will put out branches below the pruned tip, become bushy, and start more flower buds.

According to a Penn State correspondence course on home floriculture, many kinds of plants have more flowers when terminal tips are removed. Pinching is a

method used to change plant growth.

A soil mulch is important in summer care of your annuals. Any loose material, such as wood shavings or peanut hulls, spread two inches deep on the ground around plants works well. Weeds will not come through; soil dryness is reduced and the ground stays cooler.

Your garden soil in midsummer sun may go over 100 degrees. That is much too hot for shallow rooted plants like zinnias, marigolds, and many other plants. Growth of flower buds comes to a halt with roots in hot, dry soil.

To produce more flowers, pinch growing tips on your tall growing annuals. And keep your plants in better

growth by covering the soil with mulch.

To learn more about growing plants around your home, study the Penn State correspondence course in Home Floriculture. Enroll by sending \$5 plus \$1 handling to Home Floriculture, Box 5000, University Park, PA 16802. Make check payable to Penn State.



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