

Irrigate soybeans after pod set starts

GEORGETOWN, Del. — Most irrigation systems in Delaware were installed for corn. But with favorable soybean prices and the use of beans as a rotation crop, especially in fields with a center pivot system, more and more farmers are considering the possibility of

irrigating soybeans.

The big question is, when do soybeans respond to supplemental water?

This plant is very different from corn in its water requirements, says University of Delaware extension crops specialist Frank Webb. Too much

water early in its development tends to stimulate excess vegetative growth that can result in severe lodging—especially on taller, more branching varieties. Too heavy a foliage canopy can also limit the amount of light that reaches inside the plant.

The dense foliage can compete for nutrients needed for pod development and create an ideal environment for diseases. All these factors may reduce yield.

Until they've entered the reproductive stage, soybeans should be irrigated only in case of severe drought when there is danger to the plants themselves.

This is more important on early planted beans which have a long time to develop. When you move your planting date back—especially after wheat—plants have a much shorter growing season. In this case you need a certain amount of vegetative growth in order to get any yield at all.

So early water application may sometimes be called for in double-cropped beans.

Maximum yield reduction in soybeans occurs when there is severe moisture stress during late pod set and early pod fill. Some 65 to 75 percent of the water used by soybeans is needed after plants have completed their vegetative development and entered the reproductive stage. Wait until about 40 days after emergence before irrigating full-season beans, advises Webb.

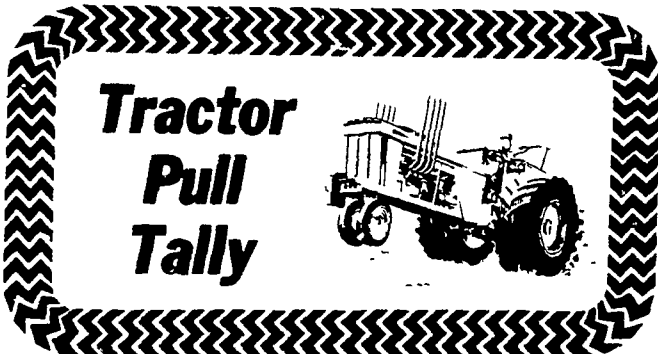
Moisture stress during vegetative growth and early flowering isn't as injurious to the soybean as it is to corn, he explains. In the case of some varieties under some conditions, a certain amount of early moisture stress may actually be beneficial, if this is alleviated before flowering time by either rain or irrigation.

Only about 25 percent of the flowers on a soybean

plant set pods even under the best of growing conditions. So the number of seeds per pod and the weight of seeds determine yield. This is why it's important that the plant not be stressed during early pod development, so irrigation then can help. Irrigation during pod fill can be equally beneficial.

The specialist has been comparing the performance of irrigated and non-irrigated soybeans at the University of Delaware's Georgetown Substation for the past two years. He says that in some cases yields have been 16 to 25 bushels high per acre under irrigation than from non-irrigated beans with normal rainfall.

Once you start irrigating soybeans, keep adding supplemental water as needed to prevent moisture stress on plants until seed moisture is down to about 50 percent. Generally this will be when the plant has begun to shed its leaves.



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Which Way 4-H Club meets

HELLERTOWN — The Which-Way 4-H club had their monthly meeting at Lake Nockamixon.

Although the July meeting was originally to be held at the park, it was cancelled because the pool was closed. Members swam, ate lunch and then conducted business.

Project demonstrations followed some of the demonstrations were: Bonnie Hottle, guinea pig foods; Jeff Stuart, photography and shadow pictures; Cathy Kotch, canine worm eggs; Walter Keller, pencil shading techniques and various pen and ink strokes; and David Mazer, stamp collecting.

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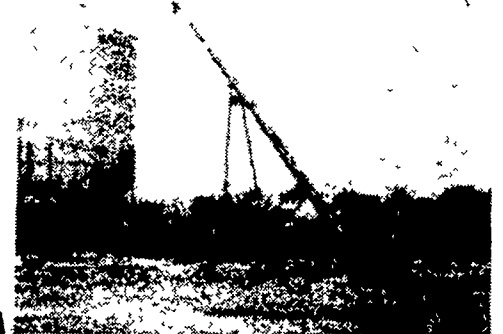
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