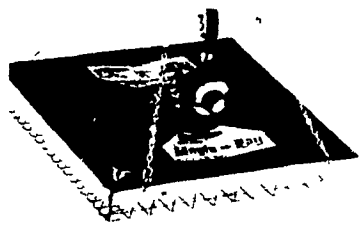
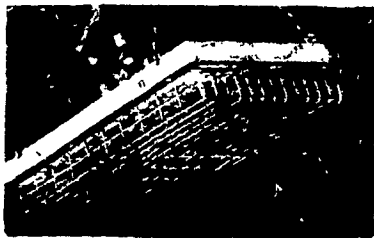


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## Raised beds

(Continued from Page D12)

were easily knocked down before planting or controlled with post-emergence herbicides. However, there are no pre- or post-emergence herbicides available for some crops, he notes. And in these cases black plastic may still be your best bet.

Transplants for eggplants used in the study were grown at the Substation. Orzolek strongly advocates growers raise their own transplants because this permits them to have seedlings ready when they're needed. "You can have good success growing your own transplants," he says.

Besides going for an early harvest on the cucumbers and eggplant, the specialist tried double-cropping a late crop of sweet corn after the cucumbers. This was sown August 5 after using Paraquat to burn-off vines. He used Spring White, a variety that usually matures in 70-76 days. Because of the extremely hot weather, corn matured very rapidly. Plants tasseled in mid-September before reaching their usual height but appear to be producing well.

"It's always a gamble to grow corn this late," he says, "because of the danger of an early hard frost and because of the intensive worm pressure at this time of year." But on the black plastic he considers it less of a gamble than on raised beds or flat ground.

The corn was planted at two different populations — the first with plants spaced evenly down rows at six-inch intervals; the second in double rows two feet apart, alternating plants every eight inches down each row for a staggered stand. This second design worked better because it permitted better spray coverage for worm control.

Purpose of this demonstration was to help small farmers produce an early, high-value crop at a minimum investment in materials and labor. He chose eggplants and cucumbers because each of these vegetables can bring a high return per acre — provided you line up your market before you plant.

Eggplant can be harvested for fresh sale once or twice a week over a three-month



Eggplants grown on raised beds with trickle irrigation could be profitable for small farmer, provided markets are lined up ahead of time.

period, provided prices remain strong. Or you can pick less often and sell larger fruits for processing. Because there's a limited demand for a vegetable like eggplant, Orzolek suggests a number of small farmers might get together and each agree to grow a half acre, selling the entire crop as a cooperative or through a single broker.

Cucumbers are another good fresh market crop for the small farmer. They do require more labor since they must be picked three to four times a week. You might consider arranging to sell your cukes to a roadside stand, or take them to the Laurel block. With a limited acreage, both crops can easily be picked by family members.



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