

Double crop corn and barley?

MIDDLETOWN, Del. — Double-cropped corn?

It's been tried before in Delaware without much success, but now the idea looks more promising. This year Middletown farmer Bill Haas got 163 bushels to the acre growing corn after barley under irrigation.

This high yield was the direct result of an excellent management package, says University of Delaware extension agronomist Dr. William Mitchell.

The corn was planted June

12 immediately after barley was harvested, using a short season hybrid (DeKalb XL 25A) that matures in 90 to 100 days.

Haas sprayed the barley stubble with Paraquat at the rate of one point per acre and Lasso and Atrazine 1.5 quarts each per acre.

He used 30 gallons of 30 percent nitrogen solution as a carrier (10 pounds nitrogen) for the Atrazine and Lasso, plus one pint per 100 gallons of X77 wetting agent.

His plant population was 25,500. At planting he applied 10 pounds of 10 percent granular Furadan per acre.

Haas irrigated immediately to get the corn out of the ground. He began watering regularly when plants were waist high. The corn received nine separate one-inch applications of water.

Twenty pounds of nitrogen were injected through the sprinkler system with each application. Over the season the corn got a total of 315

pounds of nitrogen. The crop was harvested October 22 at 23 percent moisture.

A lot of Haas' fellow farmers around the state may be skeptical of his achievement with double-cropped corn, because they've already tried to grow this crop after small grain and failed.

This was probably because they didn't irrigate or failed to achieve effective insect control, says Mitchell. By the time they'd shared their crop with the corn ear

worms and other bugs, some of them were lucky to have any left for themselves. And without water the whole idea probably won't work in this area anyway, he says.

When you're talking about double-cropping corn, you're talking about trying to grow a crop planted almost 2 months later than usual. By the time it gets in the ground, the days are getting shorter and light intensity is diminishing so you can't waste any time. You've got to get plants started fast and keep them growing rapidly.

This is exactly what Haas did. Both his starter fertilizer and irrigation at seeding were critical in getting the crop going. Furadan was also very important in reducing injury from second and third generation corn borers. And water was essential to keep the crop growing and to keep it cool enough for good pollination.

It's also very important to use a short season hybrid. In fact, says Mitchell, this is when it should be used, not in early April - unless you're shooting for the early grain market - because in most years you'll take a loss in yield by using the short season hybrids then.

The agronomist thinks the idea of double cropping corn after small grains could have considerable significance on Delmarva in meeting the corn needs of the state's broiler industry.

"We've lost close to 75,000 acres of corn to soybeans in Delaware over the last few years," he says. "We need a good balance between the two crops in order to meet the demands of the broiler industry on the Shore for both grains."

If farmers can double-crop corn the way they do soybeans, maybe more will switch back to corn.

Mitchell urges farmers who have irrigation to take a

close look at the idea, at any rate.

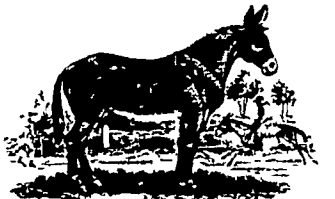
"Corn ear worm and other insects can be very bad late in the season, so this is something you need to be prepared to deal with," he warns. Application of insecticides in the planter, and in some cases later aerial sprays, may be needed. Otherwise you could be in trouble.

Whether or not it's possible to grow corn after wheat as well as barley is another question. Wheat normally matures a few weeks later than barley, so it's cutting the season rather close. But Haas may try to do just that next year, reports extension agent Dean Belt.

"He has the equipment and management abilities to do it, if anyone can," says Belt.

Haas may try to harvest his wheat a week early, using his grain drier to bring it down to the proper moisture level. This would let him plant the corn a bit sooner. If necessary, he may also harvest the corn on the early side and dry it down, too. But the big question is having enough moisture during July, August and early September to make the crop. That's where the irrigation comes in.

If the spring growing season or other conditions delay the wheat harvest for any reason, Haas still has the option to grow soybeans. That's what most farmers do after small grains anyway. The beauty of the idea of double-cropped corn is that it adds another alternative to your cropping program.



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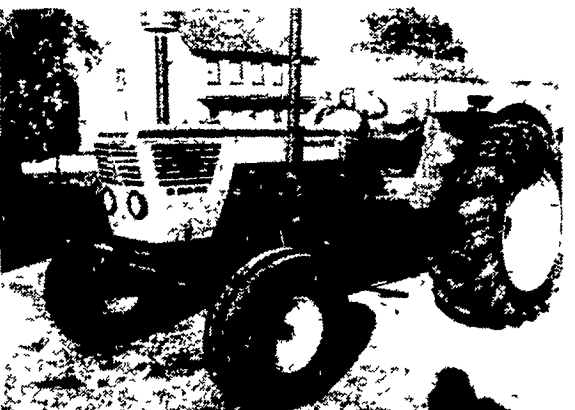
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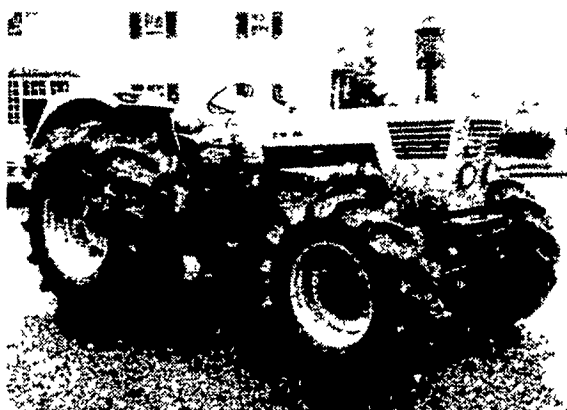


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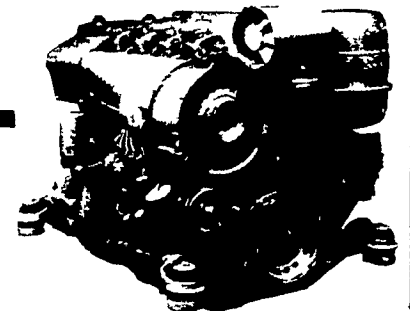
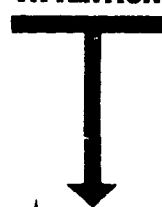
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