

February's commodity is cherries

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HARRISBURG — President George Washington, who chopped down his father's cherry tree, had not yet learned the true value of the tart red fruit. But later in life, our first President felt right at home in his orchards.

Pennsylvanians should learn from him, because with nearly 200,000 trees, Pennsylvania ranks fifth in the nation in the production of red cherries. Pennsylvania Agriculture's commodity of the month for February is the red cherry.

Tart cherries can be purchased canned, frozen or as prepared pie filling. Canned cherries are packed without added sugar and are excellent in meat entrees and frozen desserts.

Cherry pie filling is also canned but the cherries are prepared in a thick, sweetened syrup. This product is designed for quick pies and desserts, and is also great for poultry stuffing.

Frozen tart cherries are prepared with additional sugar and are normally packed in 30-pound containers. Frozen cherries are great in sauces, puddings, cookies and cakes while the juice from them is good in fruit beverages and salad dressings.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Division of Food and Nutrition suggests that frozen cherries should not be stored in bulk as purchased. The containers should be thawed just until the juice melts while the cherries remain frozen. This helps maintain the flavor of the cherries while allowing the consumer to package the fruit in convenient home freezing containers.

The division also points out that red cherries are high in vitamin A,

which is needed for normal growth and for normal vision in dim light. Vitamin A is also important in keeping the skin and inner linings of the body healthy and resistant to infection.

Red cherries contain Vitamin C and calcium as well. These nutrients are important in proper growth and formation of bones and teeth and also in blood vessel formation and the healing of wounds.

February's Pennsylvania commodity recipe follows.

CHERRY-GLAZED HAM STEAK
2 lbs. sweet potatoes (about 6)
16 oz. can tart cherries
3/4 cup brown sugar

1 Tbsp. corn starch
1 1/2 in. thick ham slice (fully cooked)

Cook unpared sweet potatoes in boiling water for 15 minutes. Peel; halve lengthwise. Drain cherries, reserving juice; add water if needed to make 1 cup liquid. Add liquid to brown sugar and corn-starch; stir in cherries and sweet potatoes. Cook uncovered over low heat for 15 minutes. Slash fat edges of ham. Broil or pan-broil 12-15 minutes on each side for cook-before-eating ham.

To serve, put ham in center of warm serving platter. Arrange sweet potatoes and cherries around ham.

Decorate windows to conserve energy

NEWARK, Del — Worried about utility bills? Put your home furnishings to work to conserve energy. Begin by taking a look at your windows and window treatments.

Make use of solar energy to brighten the home and reduce the need for artificial light. During winter, allow maximum sunlight into the home. It's one energy source that is virtually free.

To maximize sunlight use lightweight casement fabrics on windows. Their open weave lets in light and solar energy. They can be teamed with heavier draw draperies that will conserve heat during the night.

Windows shades can be used as an alternative to draperies. They are available for most window sizes and can be installed in a short

time. Traditional roll shades are available in many colors and patterns. Roman or bamboo shades also add variety.

Consider energy-saving colors, such as pale yellow and white, which reflect light, making your rooms look brighter. These rooms will take less wattage to light when electric light is needed.

Other pastel shades, such as pink, green and blue, will reflect some light. Dark colors — browns, golds, earth tones, rusts and reds — soak up light. Rooms decorated in those colors need more artificial lighting.

Choose light finish or wood paneling, as the darker finishes seem to swallow light. The same is true of wallpapers.

"Light" and "bright" are also the key words for room fur-

Soybeans respond to potash

COLUMBUS, OH — The economics of potash use on soybeans was excellent in two four-year trials at Ohio State University and Ohio Research and Development Center, according to Jay Johnson of the University.

At Springfield, 120 pounds per acre of K2O increased eight bushels per acre and boosted profit to \$35.20 per acre. At Wooster, 200 pounds per acre of K2O increased the yield 10.6 bushels per acre and boosted profit to \$41.72 per acre.

The economics of the last increment of K2O applied was also very good, the Ohio State specialist pointed out. Going from 80 pounds per acre of K2O to 120 pounds per acre of K2O returned 210 percent on the investment.

Soybeans responded so significantly to potash that Johnson reached four conclusions about potash on soybeans. (1) Soybeans respond to potash with significantly increased yields. (2) Soybean yield response to potash occurs over a wide range of soil test levels. (3) Soybeans respond to higher soil test K than corn. (4) The amount of potash now being used on soybeans is too low.

Johnson explains, "The almost linear yield increase with higher K rates means the 120 pounds per acre of K2O could have been too low for maximum yields."

When all the data (yield, soil test level, and K2O rate) were summarized from over 700 plots, soybeans needed a higher soil test level than corn.

For silt loam soils, the optimum soil test for corn is 265 pounds per acre of K. And the optimum soil test for soybeans is 325 pounds per acre of K or 60 pounds higher than for corn according to recent data.


On a silty clay loam or clay, Ohio specialists recommend building to a soil test of 370 pounds per acre of K for all crops except soybeans. For soybeans the optimum soil test should be 430 pounds per acre of K for this soil, they advise.

The trials also showed soybeans respond to potash when direct applications are made in the spring or fall preceding the crop.

"This refutes the idea that soybeans respond only to residual fertility," Johnson emphasizes. "Soybeans do respond to direct application of potash."

The Ohio scientist believes many farmers are probably missing higher yields "because of the low P and K use in most states."

A folder describing these studies is available through the Potash & Phosphate Institute, 2801 Buford Hwy., N.E., Atlanta, GA 30329.



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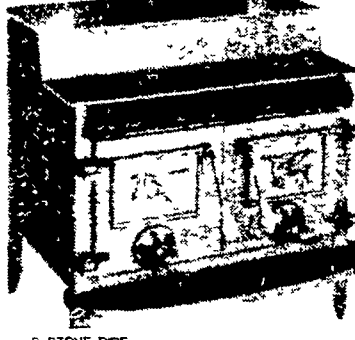
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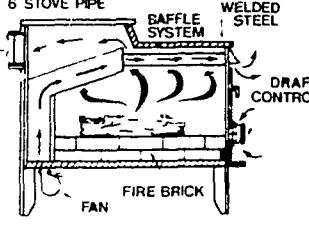
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