

Tomato growers honor champs

HERSHEY — Three Pennsylvania tomato growers were honored Tuesday during the 1981 Vegetable Conference, held here at the Convention Center.

The State Champion Tomato Growers' Club annually recognizes growers who produce outstanding yields of tomatoes for processing. The organization is sponsored by Penn State and the Tomato Processors of Pennsylvania.

This year's winners include John E. Mason, Erie County, Leon Epler Farms, Northumberland County, Raymond Martin, Snyder County.

Thomas Osborn, Erie County Extension Agent, was honored by the group for his contributions to the state's tomato industry.

In the Machine Harvest (75 to 99 acres) Division, John E. Mason, R1 Lake City produced 1617.07 tons of usable tomatoes on 84 acres to become the champion tomato grower. John averaged 19.25 tons per acre of usable, machine-harvested tomatoes for which he had contracted with Keystone Foods, Inc.; Welch Foods, Inc.;

and Redwing Co., Inc.

A combination of about 1/2 million Speedlings from Georgia and 35 acres of plug-mix seedlings were used in this operation with the varieties VF-134, US-28, and "Early Red Rock" (PSU 5253 ERR) used in both categories. Other varieties grown from Speedlings were C-37 and 77B-68 (US-68). Peto-80 was only used in the plug-mix seedlings.

A small trial plot area established in cooperation with County Agent Tom Obourn included several promising numbered selections. Most notable were C-38, 77-B-68 (just named and released as US-68), and Ferry Morse's F-6203.

C-38 yielded the equivalent of 42.1 T/A of reds, 3.1 T/A greens and 2.2 T/A rotted in a once-over, destructive harvest of 5 adjacent plants in a row (unreplicated) grown at a 5'x1' spacing (8712 plants/A). Using the same harvest sample method 77B-68 produced the equivalent of 32.3 T/A reds, 2.7 T/A greens, and 3.9 T/A rotted. The calculated yields for E-6203



Receiving the State Champion Tomato Growers plaques from Tomato Harvest Queen Robin Earnest are Leon Epler, left, Northumberland Co. and John Mason, Erie Co.

were 31.3 T/A reds, less than 1 T/A greens and 3.5 T/A rotted. All grew under extremely wet conditions throughout most of the season.

Because Speedlings hold longer in the flats, handle better, and produce a more uniform stand, all transplants this year were 'Speedling' types grown in

Georgia.

John rotates with field corn at least every two years but is attempting to rotate more and more of his tomato acreage annually with field corn. However, in fields where he will plant tomatoes for a second consecutive year, he always sows a rye cover crop

shortly after the first year's tomato harvest.

Rows were spaced 5 feet apart with all transplants set at 1 foot intervals and plug-mix drops set at 10 inches in the row. John uses a 3-row Mechanical Transplanter with standard fingers to set the

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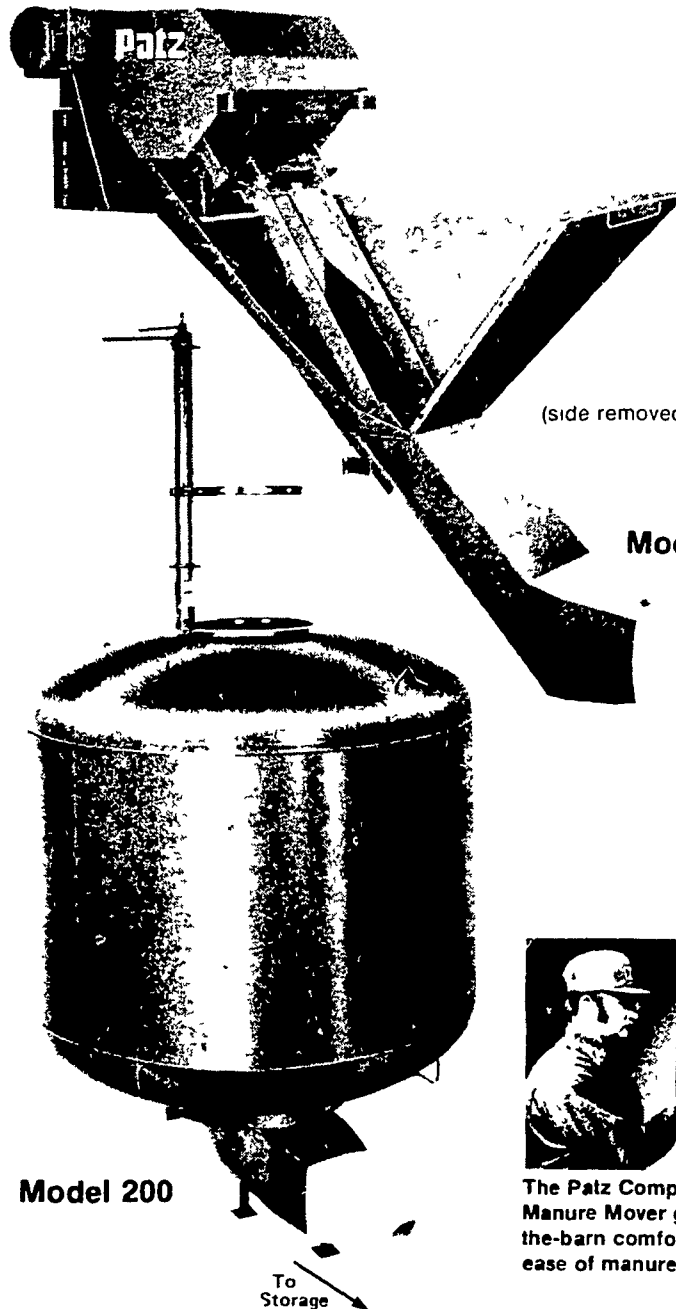
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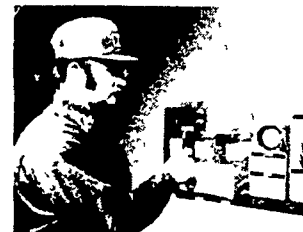


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