

Tomato growers honor champs

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Speedling transplants. In an average day (9 hours) he can plant 80,000 to 100,000 plants. Two people follow the planter, mainly to keep the boxes filled with plants, also to watch for skips.

He can direct-seed about 1½ acres per hour with his 3-row Mechanical Plug-Mix Planter. John increased his plug-mix acreage by 10 more acres this year, since he recently acquired the capability to irrigate about one-third or more of his total acreage. During a dry planting season irrigation is very essential for a good stand from the plug-mix plantings.

Mason explained no manures were applied and Penn State soil test recommendations for total lime and fertilizer needs were followed. A starter solution using 18 pounds of 10-52-8 in 200 gallons of water per acre was applied at planting time.

A week after planting, John side-dressed with 250 pounds of 10-20-20 per acre and at blossom time with 30 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre. Plants were shallowcultivated about four times using a 3-row Nobil (Danish tine) cultivator.

For weed control in most transplanted fields a tank-mix of 1½ pints of Treflan plus 3 quarts of Tillam per acre was preplant incorporated to a depth of 3 inches; some fields received a preplant treatment of Devrinol.

Approximately three weeks after transplanting ¼ pound at

Metribuzin per acre was applied as a broadcast spray over the plants. When necessary, the Metribuzin application was repeated later in the season. A combination of herbicides were used in the plug-mix operation, including Devrinol, Amiben and Metribuzin.

Ethephon, used to stimulate the ripening process, was applied to all tomatoes at the highest labeled rate using a John Beam sprayer with a 45-foot wide boom. Insecticides and fungicides were also applied with this sprayer, using 50 to 60 gallons of water per acre as a carrier. Pesticides used included Guthion, Manzate, Parathion, Difolatan, Bravo, Systox, and Kocide. This was the first time John needed to use Kocide for Bacterial Speck control.

Except for a few acres of hand-harvested tomatoes (not included in the above production figures), Mason used a 1971 model Button-Johnson with a total crew of 15 to machine-harvest all tomatoes. The machine and 10 to 12 men and women sorters, supervised by wife Sue, operated for about 6 to 7 hours per day; sometimes harvesting over 100 tons a day. Harvesting began about 8.30 a.m. and rarely went past 5 p.m. with a 45 minute lunch break. This schedule was particularly suited to the women sorters who had school-age children.

For the first time all of the crop was harvested directly into bulk dumpers and then hauled to processing plants in bulk semi-trailers.

Last year John won the

Champion Tomato Grower Award for the Class 3 Machine Harvest category.

Leon Epler Farms

Leon Epler Farms, Rt. 1, Northumberland, produced 586.71 tons of usable tomatoes on 30 acres to become the Class 4 Machine Harvest Champion Tomato Grower for 1980. Epler Farms averaged 19.56 tons per acre usable, machine-harvested tomatoes for Furman Canning Co. Varieties and number of Georgia-grown transplants used were 129,000 US-141; 80,000 C-37; 26,000 Red Rock; 16,000 US-68 (formerly 77B-68) and 14,000 US-28. US-68 tended to shatter and fall off the vine prematurely under this season's hot, very-dry conditions and thus may not be grown on the farm next year.

Field Manager Dan Van Kirk indicated that the farm follows a three-year rotation pattern of winter wheat, sod (orchardgrass-timothy-clover mixture), and then either tomatoes or potatoes. The total farm operation consists of a large retail farm market; 30 acres tomatoes; 84 acres potatoes; 200 acres alfalfa; 300 to 350 acres field corn; a 20,000 layer poultry operation and 160 dairy cattle.

Transplanting began about May 15 and ended about May 29 using a 3-row transplanter comprised of two Powell units and a Holland unit, all with standard fingers. Spacing was 5 feet by 1 foot.

Van Kirk indicated that about 10 tons of poultry manure was applied to the sod during the summer of 1979 and that the tomato fields



Thomas Obourn, Erie County Extension Agent, was presented with a pin by Dave Geise, center, Pa. Food Processors Assoc. and Pete Ferretti, Penn State Horticultural Extension Agent for his contribution to the state's tomato industry.

received 1½ tons of lime last fall. He followed Penn State soil test recommendations for fertilizer needs.

All fertilizer was applied broadcast prior to planting. No side-dressings were applied. A starter solution using 15 pounds of 16-32-16 in 275 gallons of water per acre was applied at planting time.

For weed control a tank-mix 3¾ quarts of Tillam plus ½ pound of Sencor 50 WP per acre was preplant incorporated to a depth of 3 to 4 inches. About five weeks after transplanting, ¾ pound of Sencor 50 WP was applied as a broadcast spray over the plants. Since the weather had been sunny,

warm, and dry immediately prior to the post Sencor treatment, no foliage injury was observed even at this ¾ pound rate. Plants were shallow cultivated about two weeks after planting and again after six to seven weeks.

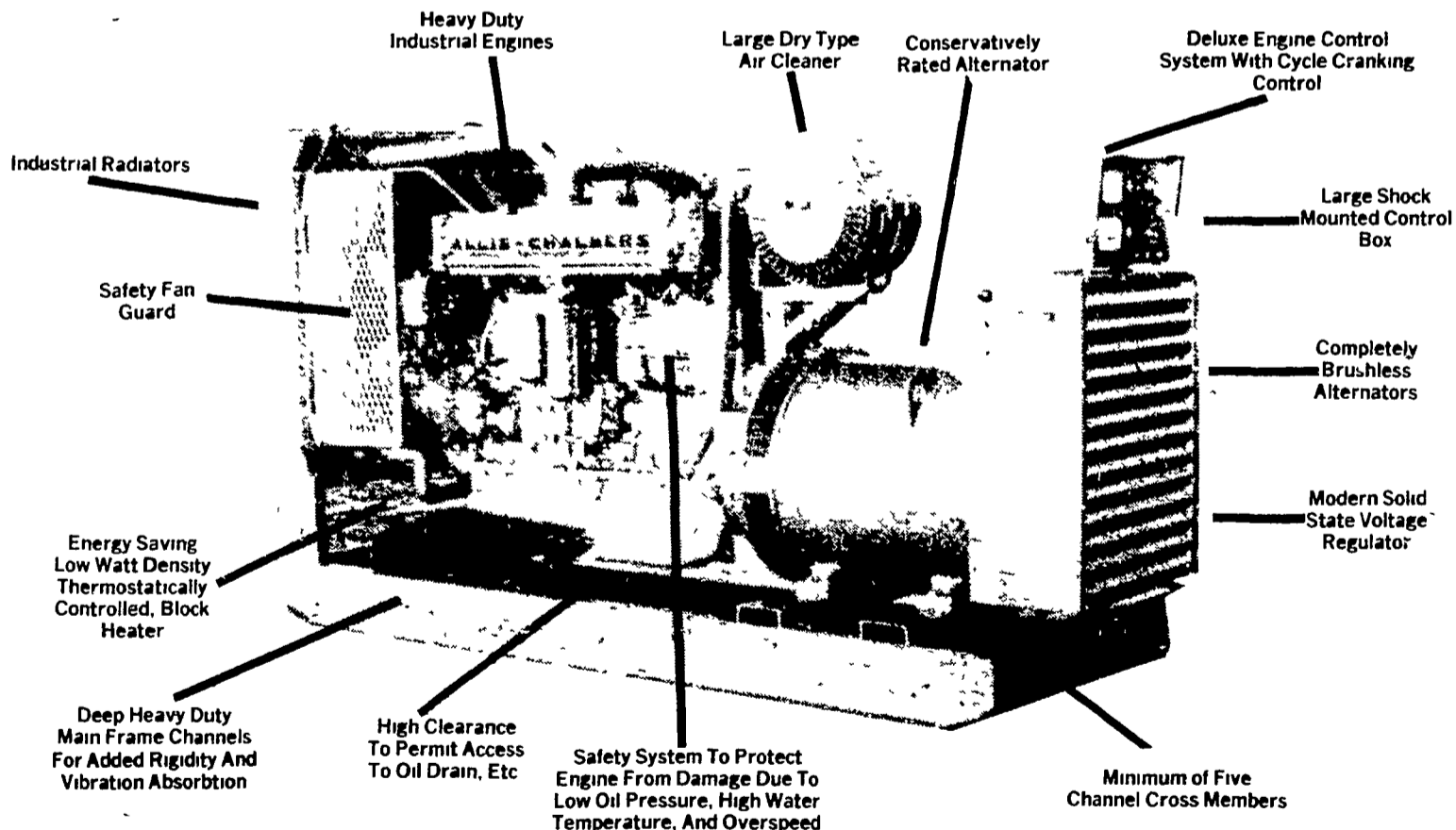
Two timely overhead sprinkler irrigations were credited as being the most important cultural practice followed in growing this season's processing tomato crops. Two inches of irrigation was applied at blossom-time and 1½ inches in late July when most of the fruit was about the size of golf balls. Since US-68 (formerly 77B-68) was the earliest maturing

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