

How to plant, manage apple trees

HERSHEY — How do you plant and manage an apple tree in its first season?

This question was posed to Fred Amberg, a nurseryman from Geneva, New York. His task was to translate and transfer his expertise gained over the years in Germany to the orchard people gathered together for the Pa. Horticultural Association's annual meeting.

In a dialect denoting his origins, Amberg advised the group to plan their orchards well ahead so they can adequately prepare planting sites and order sufficient trees.

"You should begin at least two years ahead," he said. "You need to check for nematodes and then fumigate if necessary. Those two years will allow enough time to get nutrient levels up to where they should be, with a pH of 6 to 6.5."

Amberg stressed the uselessness of trying to fertilize trees by putting chemical nutrients in the planting hole. He stated the lateral roots would be out of the 10-inch

diameter auger hole in the first year — with the fertilizer out-of-reach — and the tap root doesn't take up the nutrients.

Adding a touch of humor, Amberg confessed nurserymen like to get trees out of their way as early as possible. So the trees usually arrive at the farm three weeks ahead of schedule.

Growing serious, Amberg warned against storing the young trees in an apple storage facility until planting time.

"Apples give off ethylene gas. This gas kills trees. Even one bushel of apples in your largest room will kill your trees," he stated.

Amberg advised the group to store the trees in a cool place, around 30 to 35 degrees Fahrenheit, with roots kept covered and moist. Before planting, he recommended cutting out any suckers that may have started and checking the structure of the tree.

"You should have at least 16 to 18 inches of root stock below the bud,

with 8 inches of root. This gives you enough room to play with in determining planting depth without the danger of exposing roots. The stem should be straight — if not, send the tree back to the nurseryman and let him worry about what to do with it."

The methods used in planting trees in today's orchards, Amberg noted, include augering holes or using a 'tree planter'. The latter method, he said, tends to produce an undesirable hole with the outer edges dried out, especially when the holes are dug in the morning and the trees aren't planted until afternoon.

Should the trees be watered after planting? "Yes," said Amberg, because water tends to fill up the holes between the roots and seems to help prevent 'replant' disease.

In closing, Amberg suggested staking all newly planted trees — a temporary wooden stake will suffice and should be driven in next to the trunk.

Staking will help prevent fun-

neling around the base of the trunk, a situation created by the wind whipping the young tree around and loosening the soil around the trunk, he said. It will also allow rooting to occur in the

top six inches of soil at a faster rate, Amberg concluded, which will help the tree in total production potential over the years.—SM

Schuylkill to hold dairy day

CRESSONA — The Schuylkill County Extension Service will conduct an educational program for dairymen on Wednesday, March 4, 1981 at the Goodwill Fire Company Hall in Cressona.

Two Penn State University extension dairy specialists will be featured on the program.

Stephen B. Spencer will speak on the topics of Heard Health and Mastitis Control and will also make a presentation to update information on milking systems and energy conservation dairy equipment.

Michael L. O'Connor will discuss

various ways to improve dairy cow breeding efficiency, controlled heat periods and embryo transplants.

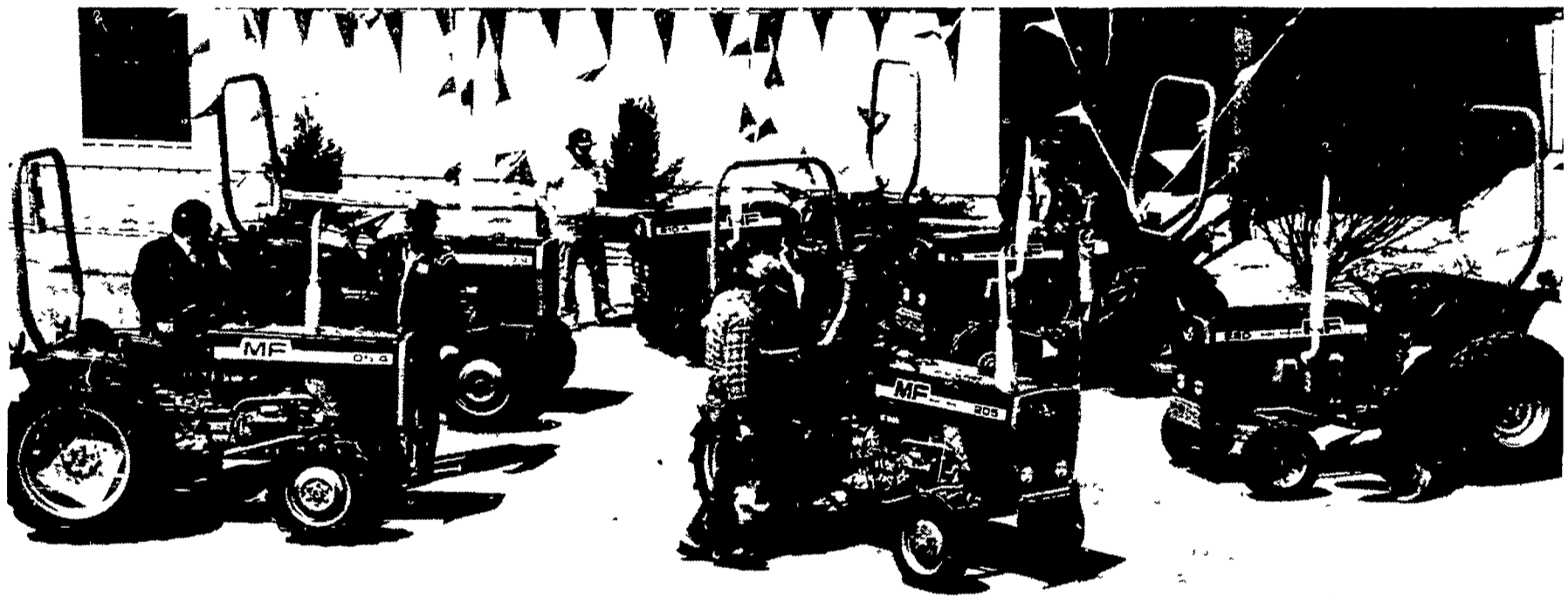
The meeting is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. and adjourn at 3 p.m. Advance registration with a fee of \$2.00 is required and can be made by contacting the Extension Office on or before February 24, 1981.

For further information contact J. Allan Shoener, County Agent - Agriculture, P.O. Box 250, Schuylkill Haven, PA 17972 (telephone 717/385-3431).

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