

## Weed control tips for vegetable growers

GEORGETOWN, Del. — As vegetable producers get ready for the growing season, one of their first concerns is weed control. When you're ready to treat, it's important to use only those herbicides labeled for the particular crop you're growing, cautions University of Delaware extension vegetable specialist Mike Orzolek.

When you use a chemical not labeled for a crop, not only do you violate EPA regulations, you also run the risk of crop injury, he says. It's just as important to apply materials at the labeled rate. If you go above this, you may get carry-over that affects the following crop in that field.

Remember that herbicides control only specific weeds, so check labels carefully and relate what you use to the weed problems in each field.

For instance, Jimsonweed may need controlling in one field, but not in others. It helps to have a good idea of the weed species in each field ahead of time.

Orzolek suggests scouting the land the previous fall and noting what your problems are. In one field the problem may be chickweed or henbit; in another, crabgrass or witchgrass.

Map out the heavy infestations. If you can't find a suitable herbicide for a particular vegetable crop such as spinach you can always switch to a different one—

perhaps sweet corn, or field corn if you're into that kind of rotation.

There are several tank mixes with atrazine which will give you good control of most annual grasses as well as the more common broadleaf weeds. Some of the more persistent broadleaves such as horsenettle which have a rhizome root system may require cultivation in addition to an herbicide for effective control.

In some cases you may need to let such stubborn weeds grow through the season, depending on the vegetable crop. Tolerate them until after harvest. Then go in and spot spray with Roundup. Wait two weeks to give this time to take effect before coming in with your disk or plow.

Growers were hoping to have a promising new material — Sonalan — available for use on cucurbit crops in Delaware this summer, but clearance didn't come through in time for the manufacturer to produce, package and distribute the chemical for 1981.

It should be available for the 1982 growing season, however, and looks good for weed control on cucurbits like watermelons, cantalopes and cucumbers, as well as beans and peas, Orzolek says.

In the meantime, there are several standard herbicides you can use on cucurbits this year. Just be sure to check the label to be sure

the material you use is safe for the crop you're growing.

The specialist suggests you go by recommendations in the current Delaware Commercial Vegetable guide. Copies of this extension publication are available at county extension offices in Newark (302-738-2506), Dover (302-736-4675), and Georgetown (302-856-5250).

If you're using a pre-plant incorporated herbicide, take care not to incorporate it any deeper than recommended. Some materials shouldn't be worked in any deeper than two inches.

If you disk them in to four or five inches, you'll either dilute them or place the herbicide below weed seeds where it can't be effective as a seed inhibitor. In either case, you won't get the control you're after.

Pre-emergence herbicides generally require water to be effective. So if you think it's going to be a dry season, be sure you provide for irrigation if you plan to use one of these materials.

Otherwise, be prepared for poor weed control, or none at all. Though moisture is less critical for them, even pre-plant incorporated materials work better if there's rain within two weeks after application.

Some new post-emergence chemicals have been cleared for use on vegetables this year. Just remember that these products are specific for either grass or broadleaf weeds — not both.

Some weed killers must be applied at the proper growth stage of the weeds to be effective — another good reason to read labels before treating. For example, to control ragweed, Basagran must be applied when weed plants are two to three inches tall. So take care not to let weeds get beyond the controllable size.

Successful weed control also depends on proper application. Check your spray equipment over well before using it. Pumps and agitators should be working

properly. Make sure spray tips aren't worn. Take care to replace screens frequently to prevent blockage.

And make sure your boom is level. If one side is higher than the other, you could get some overlap. This could result in chemical burn to your crop, or carry-over in the soil that damages the next crop.

Speaking of carry-over, there are certain herbicides which are very persistent. One used on vegetables is Devrinal. There's no reason to be afraid to use such materials, but you must be aware that after your crop is finished you won't be able to plant certain cover crops such as barley, wheat or rye unless you go in first and moldboard plow.

Disking won't turn the soil enough to dilute the chemical.

Check the label and find out what crops may be affected. Either avoid them or moldboard plow.

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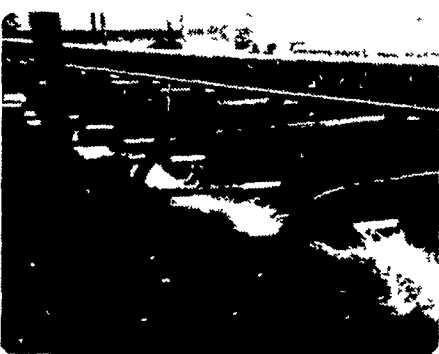
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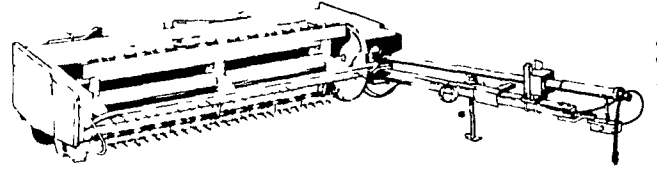
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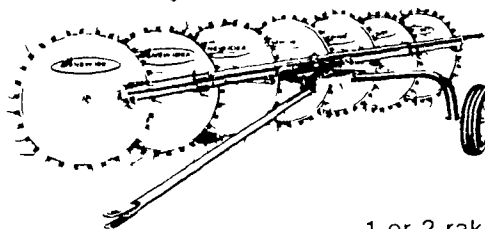
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