

Well-placed phosphorus cures purple corn

NEWARK, Dela. — Corn in many fields is showing varying amounts of purple leaf color.

"Where comparisons can be made, it's clear that this purple coloring is associated with reduced growth," says University of Delaware Extension agronomist William Mitchell.

The key factor appears to be phosphorus deficiency, he says. The problem is occurring in some fields where the soil phosphorus level seems adequate, but where the soil pH is 6.2 to 6.4.

"Cold weather is the reason most frequently given for purple corn," says the agronomist. "But this spring we've experienced an unusually warm April and normal temperatures for May.

"Still, it's likely that low soil temperatures are an important factor in the abnormal growth of corn, since cold soil seriously limits root absorption of phosphorus. This being the case, we should expect these conditions to occur fairly regularly."

The problem can be solved by the use of a well-placed phosphorus fertilizer at planting. Some growers hesitate to return to this practice because it slows down the planting operation. Others argue

that a fast start doesn't necessarily mean more corn at harvest.

A growing number of people, though, are saying that yield increases will come and phosphorus in the planter is the way to go with this relatively expensive nutrient. Broadcast rates can be cut in half with banding, which increases recovery by at least 50 percent.

Work under way at the University of Delaware Substation at Georgetown shows placement of starter fertilizer is extremely important, says Mitchell.

Placement of fertilizer one-half inch or less from the seed has been effective in terms of plant growth. But in many cases with fertilizers such as DAP (diammonium phosphate), this caused about a 20-percent stand reduction. Moving the fertilizer band two inches from the seed produced the same growth response and eliminated all evidence of phosphorus deficiency without any stand reduction. When the fertilizer band was moved five inches from the seed, there was no visible growth response.

Several nitrogen sources are being compared in Extension demonstrations at Georgetown.

"Whereas DAP at 150 pounds per acre has given excellent results,

performance this spring has been equally good with 75 pounds each of DAP and ammonium sulfate applied in a blend," Mitchell reports.

The ammonium sulfate supplies sulfur as well as nitrogen while at the same time lowering soil pH in the fertilizer band and increasing availability of soil manganese.

Since DAP raises the soil pH in and around the fertilizer band for a few weeks, the pH adjustment caused by ammonium sulfate in the blend may be especially important.

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ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Shoppers who enjoy taking advantage of Maryland's many pick-your-own farms and roadside markets have a new treat this year in the form of a greatly expanded and updated "Pick-Your-Own and Direct Farm Markets" guide.

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Maryland Roadside Marketing Association, the Cooperative Extension Service and the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Marketing Division, is free and is now available at public libraries and Extension Service offices throughout the state.

It now features 81 listings of orchards, farmers' roadside stands, and pick-your-own operations, has a map showing where they are, and includes a chart showing the approximate harvest dates for a vast array of fruits and vegetables produced in the state over the growing season.

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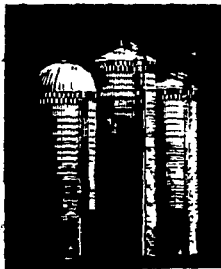
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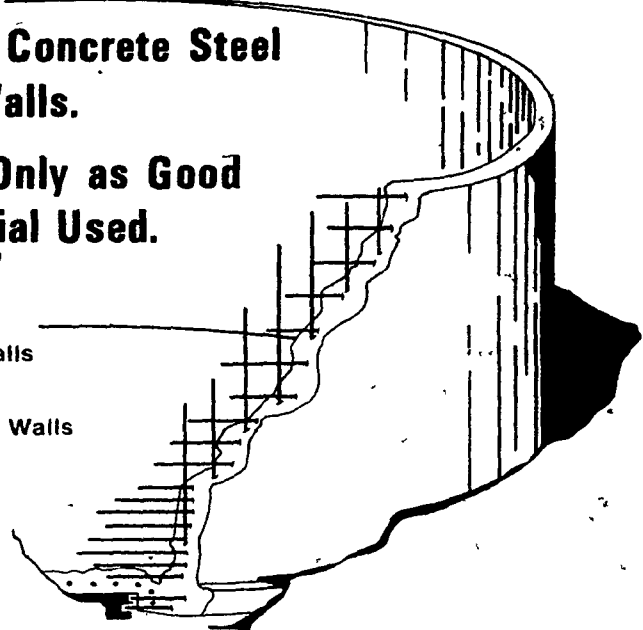
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