

# Shattercane problem continues in Pa.

LANCASTER — Corn growers in some Pennsylvania counties may face reduced yields because of increased shattercane infestations in their fields this spring.

In Southeast counties, which produce over 30 percent of the state's corn crop, shattercane has been increasing at an alarming rate. The weed competes with the corn plant for soil nutrients, sunshine and moisture, all essential elements of plant growth.

According to Don Robinson, adult farm instructor at the Eastern Lancaster County School District, shattercane has been in the state for over 10 years.

"Part of the problem is proper weed identification," he admits.

"Farmers have been confusing it with johnsongrass, another troublesome sorghum weed and haven't always used the best control."

Shattercane, sometimes called wild cane, was introduced into Pennsylvania as a summer annual forage crop.

"Shattercane can be brought into the state through sorghum-sudangrass hybrids that are contaminated with small amounts of shattercane seed and feed grains that are bought in the Midwest and sold in Pennsylvania," he says.

The modern corn harvester is also blamed for its more recent spread.

Shattercane seed can emerge from depths as great as six inches in the soil. At the seedling stage, it looks like corn. However, as it grows and reaches a height of three to 12 feet, it becomes very competitive and can drastically reduce corn yields.

Shattercane is extremely tough to control because it can germinate from spring until late in the summer.

"The seedheads usually shatter before the crop is harvested," Robinson says. "Uncontrolled light stands of shattercane develop into heavy infestations rapidly."

With good tillage, shattercane can be under control early in the season. "However, by the end of

the summer it may start germinating again," Robinson says. "Long lasting control is important."

Robinson, along with fellow adult farmer instructor, Robert Anderson, has researched herbicides for the past four years. "For severe infestations, we've found Eradicane Extra herbicide in combination with atrazine or Bladex herbicide provides the best control," Robinson reports. The

"Extra" in the product, he explains is an extender that prolongs weed control activity in the soil. Sutan+ herbicide is effective on light to moderate infestations.

Robinson and Anderson recommend a double incorporation of preplant herbicides for shattercane control.

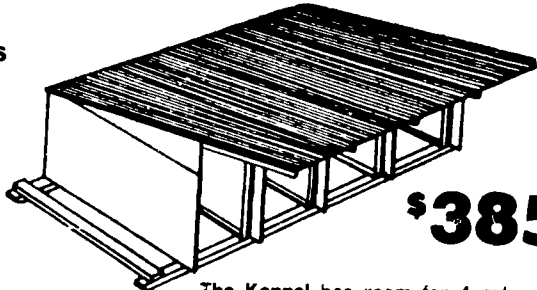
"An important thing farmers must remember is to work the soil only when it is dry," they say. "Wet conditions result in a less uniform incorporation."



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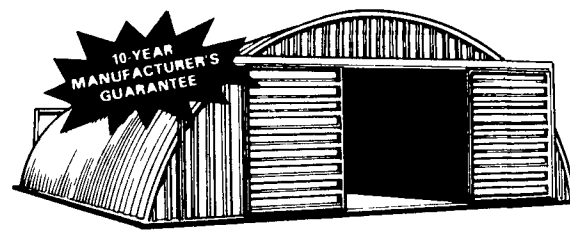
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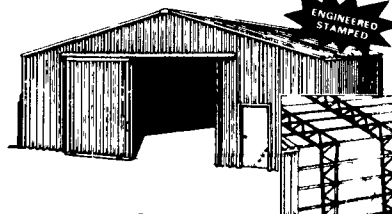


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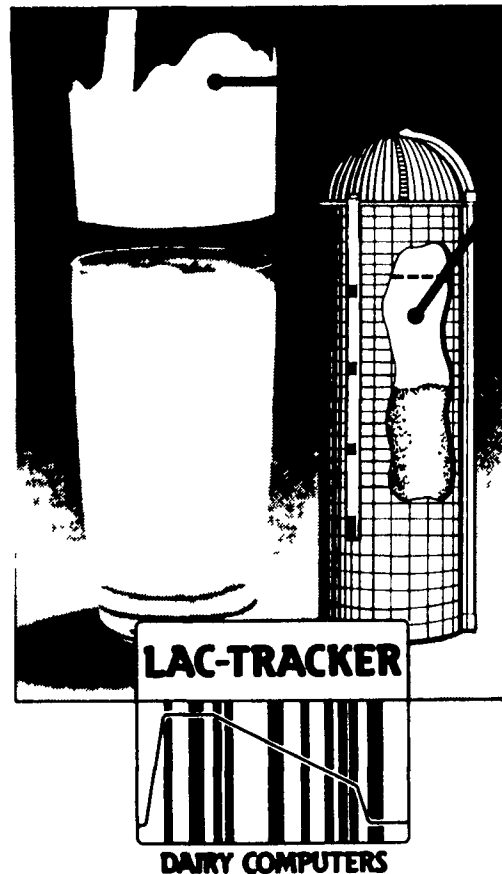
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