

Pickling cuke growing tips given

NEWARK, Del. — Pickling cucumbers have been an important vegetable crop on Delmarva for many years. Acreage has increased slowly and steadily in recent years. The crop is an important commodity for both small, part-time farmers and large, specialized operators. On many larger farms pickles are machine harvested in a once-over, destructive operation, a labor-saving practice which has altered production methods.

According to University of Delaware extension vegetable specialist Ed Kee, standard cucumber types have a monoecious flowering habit — that is, they produce two types of flowers on the same plant, male and female. The male flowers, which produce the pollen needed for fruit development, are located mostly on the main stem. The female flowers grow primarily on lateral stems and contain the ovaries which ultimately develop into pickles. Since standard cucumber types produce more male than female flowers, high yields depend on continual vine growth for more female blooms.

Plant breeders have developed new gynoecious cucumber types which give more concentrated fruit set for once-over mechanical harvest. "Supposedly," says Kee, "these hybrids produce only female flowers, with male pollinating blooms on separate plants. But even female plants have a few male blooms on them. More female flowers mean more fruit and higher yields, with greater numbers of pickles ripening at one time."

Pickling cukes are usually grown under a contract arrangement between processor and grower. The processor selects the variety to be grown and provides the seeds. In choosing the hybrid, consideration is given to yield potential as well as quality factors like the length/diameter ratio, shape, firmness, seed cavity size, uniformity of color and spine color. (The spines are the little bristles on the fruit.) Kee says white-spined varieties yellow and soften more slowly than black-spined types. This is important if harvest tends to be delayed, such as with destructive mechanical harvesting, or if large-sized fruits are desired.

Top quality pickles have a length/diameter ratio of 2.7:1 to 3:1. For example, a cucumber 3½ inches long and 1 1/8 inches wide has a 3:1 L/D ratio. The pickles should also be well-shaped — straight, with little or no taper at

the ends. Uniform green rind, a small seed cavity and firm, succulent flesh are other desirable traits. And of course, the fruit must be free of surface or internal defects.

According to Kee, only gynoecious hybrids are used for machine harvest pickles. They're also the main type grown now for hand harvesting. Row spacing for hand harvest varies between 36 and 60 inches, with plants spaced from 12 to 24 inches apart in narrow rows, and 9 to 15 inches apart in wider rows.

Higher plant populations are required for maximum machine harvested yields, the specialist says. Row spacings in this case vary from 18 to 24 inches, with plants spaced 4 to 6 inches apart. This gives a population of 50,000 to 90,000 plants per acre. Precision planters are used to plant pickles for machine harvest.

Pollination is important when growing cucumbers. In hand harvested fields, the natural bee population is often adequate, though Kee says it's wise to supplement this with hives. Machine harvested pickles require additional hives. In these fields, a good guideline is one hive per acre.

Since machine harvested pickles have a short season (50 to 60 days), early fields often do not require fungicide sprays. Later plantings maturing in August or September may need treatment to protect foliage as well as fruit, which is susceptible to belly rot. The most common belly rot is caused by the organism Rhizoctonia. This disease occurs on light, sandy ground and causes distinct lesions and cracks in the fruit.

Another fungus disease, Pythium rot, is usually associated with heavier ground or low spots in a field. Affected fruit becomes soft, watery and eventually disintegrates.

To control Rhizoctonia, Kee recommends spraying Bravo on the ground before vines start to run. He says it may be necessary to treat later plantings in fields with a history of belly rot. Ridomil will control Pythium but not Rhizoctonia infections. Walk all fields at least once a week and check them carefully for signs of rot.

Kee has several pickle variety, growth regulator and disease control studies under way this summer at the University of Delaware Substation near Georgetown. He encourages growers or processors interested in visiting these plots to call him at 302-856-5250.

Montour-DeLong Fair winners reported

BY MARGIE FUSCO

WASHINGTONVILLE — Champions were plentiful at the Montour-DeLong Fair, Aug. 13-18 in Washingtonville, Montour County.

Dairy cattle were judged by breed in both 4-H and open classes. Four cows owned by Bonny Sue Wolfe of R2 Sunbury, took 4-H Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion in both Brown Swiss and Guernsey categories.

Other 4-H winners were Michael Hertzler, R2, Milton, Grand Champion Guernsey; Karen Hertzler, R2, Milton, Reserve Grand Champion Guernsey. In the Ayrshire category, Brad Shultz of R3, Danville, took both Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion. The Holstein Grand Champion was owned by Greg Shultz, R5, Danville. Kathy Jo Wolfe, R1, Milton, owned the Reserve Grand Champion Holstein.

Susan Moslock of R1, Danville, took Open Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion in the Jersey competition. The Open Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion in the Ayrshire group went to William and Carl Sandel of R3, Danville. Greg Shultz of R5, Danville, owned the Grand Champion Holstein in the open class and Randy Kitchen, R5,

Danville, owned the Grand Reserve Grand Champion Holstein.

A youth class was also judged in the Holstein category. Animals owned by Jana Kitchen of R3, Danville, took Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion in this class.

In other livestock judging, the winning 4-H market steers were

owned by Paul Wertz (Grand Champion) and Jason Brokenshire (Reserve Grand Champion), both of R5, Danville. Open class Grand Champion market steers, judged by breed, were owned by Jason Brokenshire (Angus), Paul Wertz (Charolais), Jackie Reed, R.D. 5, Danville (Hereford), and Matt George, R.D. 5, Danville (Other).

Jr. swine winners listed


HONESDALE — Results of the Junior Swine Show at the Wayne County Fair include:

Grand Champion Market Hog Holly Reed
Reserve Grand Champion Market Hog Sue Swartz
Lightweight 1 Christine Meed 2 Mark Lewis, 3 Scott Lewis
Medium Lightweight 1 Jennifer Davis 2 Mark Lewis 3 Cindy Barrett
Heavy Lightweight 1 Kevin Urian 2 Robert Lewis 3 Robert Lewis
Champion Lightweight Kevin Urian Reserve Champion Lightweight Robert Lewis
Light Middleweight 1 Jennifer Davis 2 Joe Davis, 3 Billy Tannies
Medium Middleweight 1 Bruce Rutledge 2 Brian Worobey 3 Cliff Jones
Heavy Middleweight 1 Clarke Tannies 2 Jim Edsell 3 Dean Rutledge
Champion Middleweight Clarks Tannies Reserve Champion Middleweight Jim Edsell
Light Heavyweight 1 Sue Swartz 2 Anthony Robinson 3 Kevin Edsall
Medium Heavyweight 1 Holly Reed 2 Anthony Robinson 3 Michael Marks

Heavyweight 1 Matthew Marks 2 Josh Sheard, 3 Lauris Baldwin
Champion Heavyweight Holly Reed Reserve Champion Heavyweight Sue Swartz

Fitting
Senior Division Fitting 1 Lisa Hellmers, 2 Sue Swartz, 3 Mark Lewis
Middle Division Fitting 1 Cliff Jones, 2 Julie Worobey, 3 Josh Sheard
Intermediate Division Fitting 1 Jim Edsell 2 Dean Rutledge, 3 Roland Travis Jr
Junior Division Fitting 1 Scott Lewis, 2 Clarke Tannies 3 Dana Curley
Champion Fitter Jim Edsell, Reserve Champion Fitter Cliff Jones

Showing
Senior Division Showmanship-1 Robert Lewis 2 Rich Terrel, 3 Bill Terrel
Middle Division Showmanship 1 Julie Worobey 2 Josh Sheard, 3 Joe Davis
Intermediate Division Showmanship-1 Ann Marie Peters, 2 Matthew Marks, 3 Brian Worobey
Junior Division Showmanship 1 Angela Riemann 2 James Knehr, 3 Scott Lewis
Champion Showman Julie Worobey Reserve Champion Showman Robert Lewis

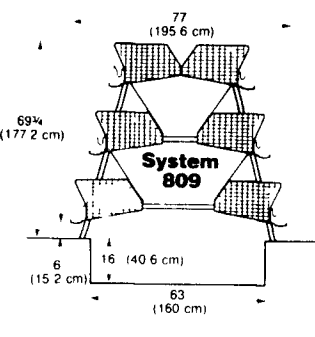


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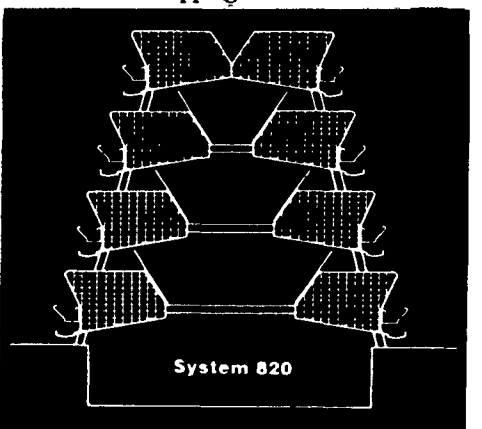


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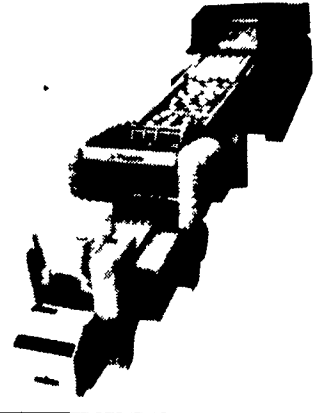
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