

Hatfield Packing honored



John Clemens of Hatfield Packing was recognized for outstanding contributions to the Montgomery County 4-H Center Fund Raising Campaign. The "Friend of 4-H" certificate was presented by Fred Seipt of Lansdale, on behalf of the Montgomery County Farm, Home and 4-H Foundation.

Erdenheim Farms donates \$10,000



Commissioner of Paul Bartle (right) presents a \$10,000 check from Mr. Eugene Dixon of Erdenheim Farms in Flourtown for the new Montgomery County 4-H Center in Creamery. Accepting the check is Merrill Zimmerman of Ambler, chairman of the Farm, Home and 4-H Foundation. Funds are still needed to complete the 4-H Center meeting areas and outside facilities.

'Gene banks' help preserve plant varieties

FLEMINGTON, N.J.

The annual deluge of seed catalogs is underway. New vegetable varieties are offered every year. As improved varieties are developed and marketed they replace older ones.

The disappearance of past favorites may be disconcerting to gardeners. Plant breeders have seen the loss of plant varieties as alarming because plant diversity (that is, genetic diversity) is the

"raw material" of plant improvement, a never ending challenge. Concern for preserving plant diversity resulted in establishment of a world wide network of gene banks which serve as repositories and sources of "raw material" for plant breeders.

Similar concerns among gardeners interested in preserving heirloom and special quality varieties have prompted the development of organizations dedicated to this purpose. The largest is Seed Savers Exchange, which publishes a yearbook containing vegetable varieties available from or wanted by members. They also inventory non-hybrid seeds still being offered by seed companies. A fondly remembered old favorite might be found through them; there may be a long lost variety here in Hunterdon County to be shared. For more information about Seed Savers send a stamped, self-addressed, legal size envelope to 203 Rural Avenue, Decorah, Iowa 52101.

Saving home grown seed may be essential to preserving an old variety. Many gardeners save their own seed as an economy measure or just for fun, too. Any seed saved from past years (whether home grown or purchased) should be checked to be sure its still viable before depending on it for this year's planting.

Roll several seeds of each type in damp paper towel, put the roll in a plastic bag and check every couple of days for sprouting. Remember, also, that seed from hybrid plants should not be saved - the second generation will not be like the parent. And home grown seed from melons, cucumbers, squash, and corn will produce unfortunate surprises unless the plants were specially handled for seed production.

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