

## New cucumber is sweet, fights off insects

WASHINGTON - A cucumber that stays sweet while it fights off insects and plant diseases has been developed by U.S. Department of Agriculture and University of Nebraska scientists.

The cucumber, "County Fair 83," is ideal for home gardens, says Clinton E. Peterson, horticulturist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service at Madison, Wis. Differing in size and color from standard commercial processing varieties, the cucumber is suited for both salads and homemade pickles.

The new cucumber does not become bitter even under severe stress caused by plant disease, drought or inadequate soil nutrients. This helps ward off cucumber beetles that like to munch on vines having a bitter taste.

That's good news, he says, for gardeners who are wary of dousing their plants with insecticides and who are also tired of seeing healthy cucumber crops suddenly destroyed by disease when they are about ready to bear. Cucumber beetles spread the bacteria that cause a wilt disease.

"Bacterial wilt is rarely a problem in commercial fields because of chemical controls that stop the disease-carrying beetle,"

he said. "But application of these chemicals isn't practical in home gardens. That's why the non-bitter vines are such an advantage."

Peterson, who directed the breeding and testing, says County Fair 83 also is resistant to scab, cucumber mosaic virus, powdery mildew, downy mildew, anthracnose, angular leaf spot, and fusarium wilt.

Cucumbers from County Fair 83 can be grown without seeds, he says. The plant, which is strictly female, will produce seedless cucumbers if they are not fertilized by pollinating insects from nearby pollen-bearing plants.

These seedless cucumbers are slow maturing, he says, and don't lose color and soften on the vine as quickly as normal seed-producing varieties.

The cucumbers will appeal more to home gardeners than to commercial growers, Peterson said. They measure a little more than three inches long when they reach one inch in diameter, longer than standard commercial pickling varieties, and too short for use as commercial fresh-market slicer types. They also don't have the tough skin needed for shipment, he said.

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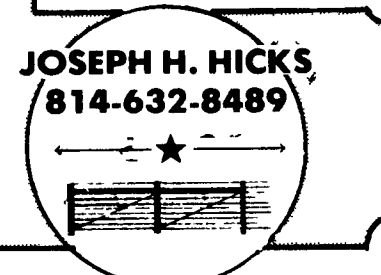
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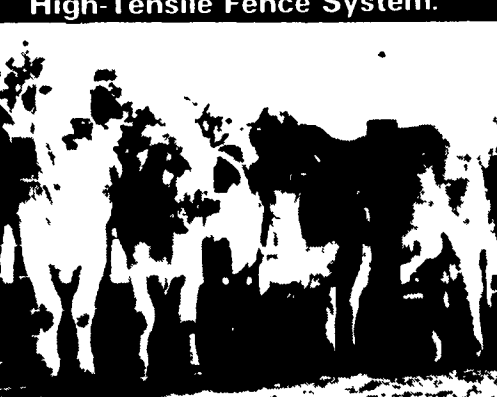
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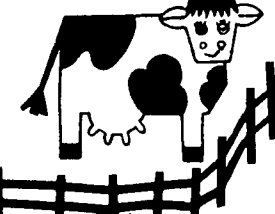
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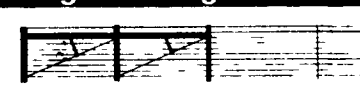
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