

**WORLD WIDE AND NATIONAL FARM WATCH**

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**CATTLE ON FEED UP 15 PERCENT**—Cattlemen placed 150,000 more animals in feedlots in February than they did a year earlier. That represents a 15 percent increase in cattle placed on feed this February over last.

Cattle being fed for slaughter March 1, however, were down 3 percent from a year ago and 10 percent below two years earlier in

the seven largest cattle feeding states, the USDA reported yesterday.

**IOWA STATE STUDY SAYS FARMERS SITTING TIGHT**—A study conducted by Iowa State University revealed that fewer farmers are undergoing bankruptcy or foreclosure than the researchers expected. ISU extension sociologist Paul Lasley

said two-thirds of Iowa's farmers have moderate to low debt loads. "But still, people are not taking any risks." He said almost everyone has either been burned financially or knows someone who has in the farm recession. The study involving 1,817 farm operators began a year ago. It asked participants if they were going to expand their operations by buying or renting additional land or by making major equipment purchases. Most are neither expanding nor reducing the size of their operations, the study showed. Lasley said the few who were planning to expand came from among the younger, better educated, larger scale operations who had more farm sales and larger debt loads.

**CATTLE BULL MARKET WON'T MATCH 1978-79**—Observers are pointing out similarities between the current cattle market and the last major upswing in 1978-79, but most analysts and retailers do not expect top prices to reach levels that saw fed steer prices top at \$79.25 in April of 1979, \$15 per cwt. higher

than last Friday's \$64.27 closing price for April cattle.

The difference, analysts say, is in the demand factor with people more prone to switch to poultry and production on the increase in that industry. "If the demand for beef was as strong as it was in 1979, fed steer prices would be in the \$80 range now," said Bill Lawless, president of Lawless Commodities.

**\$50,000 PAYMENT GETS MIXED REVIEWS**—Lawmakers are not jumping with enthusiasm over administration efforts to close loopholes on the \$50,000 ceiling on farm program payments. House Agriculture Committee chairman Kika de la Garza (D-Tex.) said the proposal will be studied but he added, "those extra payments are, in effect, part of the process of making America more competitive without bankrupting farmers." Some lawmakers fear too rigid enforcement of the ceiling would force some producers out of the program and cause them to increase their production, which in turn would expand the supply of agricultural goods forcing prices

down and damaging both farmers and taxpayers.

**FARM CREDIT'S SPECIAL LAND SALE A SUCCESS**—The special terms on sales of farmland by Farm Credit Services of St. Paul has successfully served its purpose. The system sold nearly a quarter-of-a-million acres of land in Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and Michigan since the special sale began in January. Terms of interest as low as 4.9 percent and down payments as low as 10 percent brought thousands of calls and resulted in sales of all targeted land at prices averaging above appraised value. Most of the buyers were operating farmers and 25 percent of the sales have been for cash, reported Glen Callin, senior vice president of FCS of St. Paul.

**Maple Sugar Festival**

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Except for a few demonstration trees, most of the sugar maples tapped for the "Hibernia syrup" were actually in another Chester County park, Springton Manor, not yet open to the public. The demonstration trees were popular with finger-licking children, as was the taste test of raw sap, commercial syrup and Hibernia syrup.

After learning how to identify the sugar maple, a tree owner could buy taps at the festival and take home free instructions for collecting sap, boiling it down and canning the syrup that results after six hours of boiling. Festival goers could also pick up recipes that substitute maple syrup for sugar. For those who did not plan to make their own, pure Pennsylvania maple syrup was for sale, along with maple butter and maple sugar candy.

**Get Vegetables, Flowers**

**Off To A Good Start**

**FLEMINGTON, N.J.** — Starting vegetables and flowers from seed indoors can be a gardener's delight or disaster. There are several keys to success. If one is critical, it's providing adequate light.

Seedlings need a lot of light to develop into sturdy, vigorous plants that will thrive in the garden. Even a sunny, south window is usually less than ideal. Of course, a greenhouse would be perfect, but a simpler and less costly solution is fluorescent light. A two-tube "shop lite" is an excellent plant growing fixture; they are often on sale and relatively inexpensive, too.

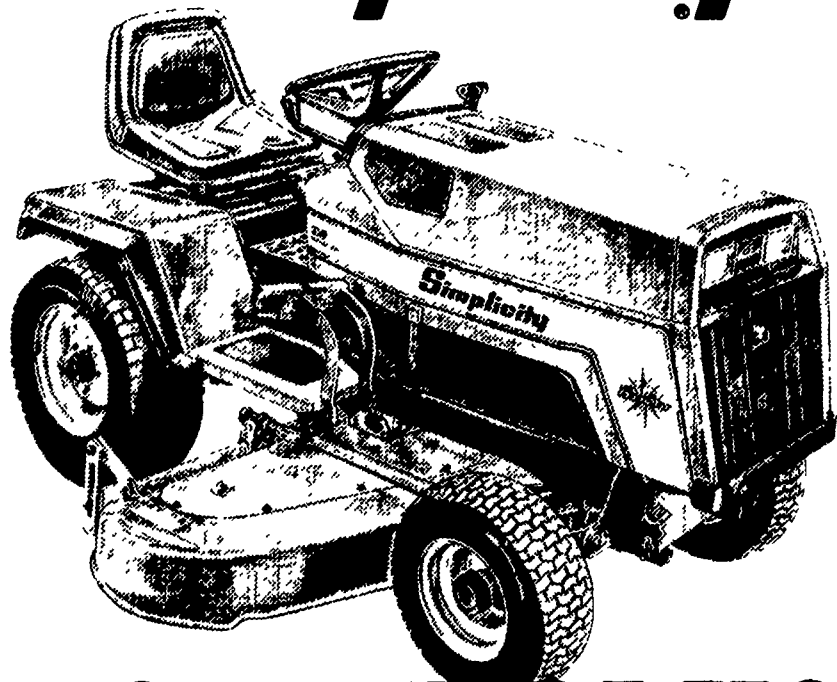
There is no need to use special lights; cool-white fluorescent tubes are fine for raising seedlings. If the fixture is hung with chains; it can be easily adjusted for height of the plants. Adding an automatic timer to turn the lights on and off makes things really convenient. Gardeners who have been less than successful starting seeds in the past should try lights, 14 to 16 hours per day, 4 to 6 inches, above the plants.

Temperature is important, too. Many seeds germinate best at temperatures in the 70's, even 80's, but most seedlings will grow best indoors at temperatures around 65 to 70°F, during the day and somewhat lower at night. Inadequate light and/or high temperatures produce the tall spindly seedlings that gardeners often end up with starting seeds indoors.

Seeds should be started in sterile planting medium. Soil straight from the garden, may contain organisms that cause "damping off," a deadly problem that can wipe out seedlings in no time. The easiest way to avoid the problem is to use a commercial soilless mix. These products also make it difficult to over-water plants, another hazard to avoid.

Growing good transplants indoors is a challenge. The right light, temperature, and mix can help gardeners meet it.

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