

For Best Results, Fine-Tune Nitrogen Applications

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — V. Allan Bandel, an Extension agronomy specialist at The University of Maryland, suggests that you take a good look at how your nitrogen fertilizer is applied at planting time.

The rate of nitrogen application should depend on the corn variety being planted, the type of tillage system being used, and the yield potential of your soil. "You should also consider the kind of nitrogen formulation being applied and the method being used," Bandel says.

Longtime research by University of Maryland agronomists indicates that maximum economic yields in fields of continuous no-till corn usually occur when nitrogen is applied at a rate of 150 to 180 pounds per acre. This statement assumes that no manure has been applied to the field, and no legumes have been seeded there in recent years.

Conventionally tilled fields in Maryland appear to reach their maximum economic yield under similar conditions with only 120 to

150 pounds of nitrogen per acre — about 30 pounds less than in no-till fields.

When properly managed, however, no-till cornfields will outyield conventionally tilled fields in most years, Bandel pointed out. So the extra nitrogen recommended for no-till planting is normally a good investment. Establishing a precise nitrogen rate for your fields also depends on soil type and the kind of fertilizer formulation being used. For help in determining methods and rates of application, contact your county Extension agricultural agent.

Bandel notes that a 30-percent nitrogen solution is the most common direct-applied nitrogen fertilizer formulation used in Maryland. He recommends applying starter fertilizer in a band near each row at planting time to meet part of the corn crop's nitrogen requirements for the current growing season. The starter fertilizer could supply about 20 pounds of nitrogen per acre and all of the phosphorus requirements for the season, as

determined by a soil test.

The rest of the nitrogen can be applied later, either by dribbling or soil injection. Timing is less critical with injection than with surface applications.

Phosphorus in the starter fertilizer helps get corn plants off to a

fast start, Bandel says, so that they can compete successfully with weeds. He notes that phosphorus is much better utilized by corn plants under no-till conditions than with conventional tillage. For that reason, The University of Maryland's soil testing laboratory now makes separate recom-

mendations for phosphorus requirements, depending on the type of tillage system which a farmer is using.

Soil testing kits for submission to the laboratory are available from county offices of The University of Maryland's Cooperative Extension Service.

Tent Caterpillars Increasing This Year

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — While spring means many things to many people, for insects it is the feeding season. This spring, populations of the eastern tent caterpillar have increased dramatically. The eastern tent caterpillar, a common species which makes tents in the crotches of trees, has occurred in extremely low numbers for the past three years. This year, the insect has experienced a population explosion, with the result that some trees are experiencing defoliation.

When tents are observed in the spring, the eastern tent caterpillar is the cause, not the gypsy moth. The gypsy moth does not form tents and has five pairs of blue dots followed by six pairs of red dots. The eastern tent caterpillar is black with a white stripe down the back and brown and yellow lines on the sides.

The eastern tent caterpillar only reproduces once each year, and is active only for about four to six weeks. The rest of the time is spent as eggs on tree branches. The mature caterpillar is 2 to 2½ in-

ches in length. Just before forming a cocoon, the caterpillars wander about looking for the ideal place to pupate. These are the large caterpillars seen now through the end of May on tree trunks and on the ground.

Control is seldom necessary. The eastern tent caterpillar has a large number of predators and parasites which help keep the population in check.

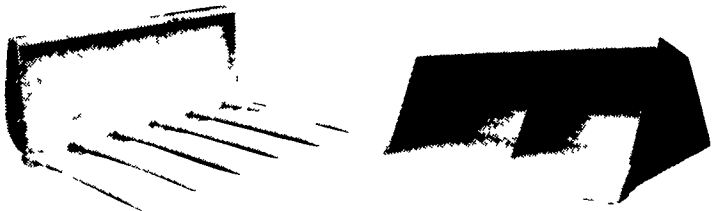
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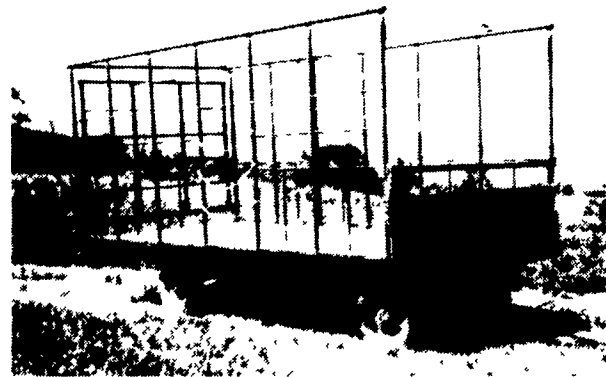
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