

Search For Soil Insects Should Start Now

NEWARK, DE — If your garden had a weed problem last fall, it's worthwhile to check for soil insects this spring.

"Most of the soil insects that attack garden plants are favored by weed growth," says Mark Graustein, University of Delaware Extension entomologist. However, if you turned the soil over last fall, the chances for soil insect problems this spring are reduced."

Graustein says that mulching and other practices that increase soil organic matter seem to attract certain pests such as seedcorn maggots and wireworms. White grubs and cutworms are often found in land left in sod or unmanaged for several years.

"When it's possible, rotate plants in the garden from year to year to help reduce soil insect populations," the specialist says.

Graustein suggests that home gardeners check their garden for soil insects now. "A simple observation of the insects that appear when the soil is turned over for the first time will give a good indication of what type and how many pests there are," he says. "Close

observation will require breaking apart soil clods."

The following soil insects most commonly cause problems in home vegetable plantings:

***Seedcorn Maggots** — Adults resemble houseflies. Larvae are white maggots found in or near germinating seed. In their presence seeds may fail to germinate or seedlings will be very weak. Bore holes in seed cotyledons are a sign

of infestation.

***Black Cutworms** — Larvae are gray to brown with light stripes and have a greasy appearance. They feed nocturnally, cutting seedlings at or within a few inches of soil surface.

***Climbing Cutworms** — Larvae are gray to brown with light dots down the back and smooth skin. They climb plants at night

and feed on foliage, buds or fruit.

***Wireworms** — These worms are long and cylindrical, with a smooth, hard, yellow to brown skin. Primarily root feeders, they often bore into the stems of seedlings below soil level.

***White Grubs** — The larvae of May, June and Japanese beetles, these grubs are one-half to one inch long, white with brown heads. They curl in a typical C shape.

Grubs feed on roots, tubers and other subsurface plant parts. They can feed for one to three years in this form.

There are other soil insects that occasionally cause trouble. "Because there is always something to be found, it's important that you properly identify the insect," says Graustein. "Not all insects are pests."

No-Till Equipment Available In Montgomery County

CREAMERY — The Montgomery County Conservation District will have the latest no-till planting equipment available to assist county farmers in reducing soil erosion this year. No-till planting means planting in existing grass or crop residue which eliminates exposing the soil to rainfall and erosion. Herbicides are used to control unwanted vegetation just as in conventional farming. The

no-till equipment available for leasing is as follows: a 10 foot wide Grain Drill, 7-inch row spacing for \$9/acre; 4-row Cornplanter - 30-inch row spacing for \$9/acre; (2) 4-row cornplanters - 38-inch row spacing for \$9/acre; a 6-row cornplanter 30-inch row spacing for \$11/acre.

The 6-row cornplanter is equipped to handle liquid fertiliz-

er, while the other cornplanters will utilize dry fertilizer.

The program not only encourages the farmer to try no-till, but also gives him a first hand look at the refinements on the latest planters. "Interest is growing in the no-till program in Montgomery County," says Richard Kadwill Erosion Control Specialist for Montgomery County Conservation District.

In 1986, 1,700 acres were no-tilled, and in the 1987 growing season, 1,800 acres were planted through the District's program with an estimated soil savings of 7,200 tons.

For more information on the no-till equipment program and scheduling call the Montgomery County Conservation District at 489-4506.

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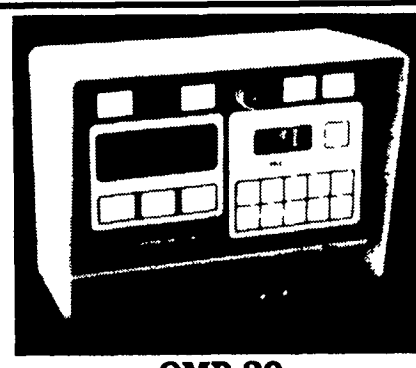
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