

Tomato Expert Is Program Speaker

SCRANTON (Lackawanna) — Dr. Randolph Gardner, from the North Carolina State University Experiment Station, will be the principal speaker at the Northeast Regional Tomato Growers meeting on January 5 at Thompson's Dairy Bar at Newton in Lackawanna County.

A graduate of Cornell University, Gardner has been involved in tomato research at the Mountain

Horticultural Crops Research Station in North Carolina for 12 years. His primary responsibility has been to develop new tomato varieties of good quality and disease resistance to help growers stay competitive in eastern markets. Such well known varieties as "Mountain Pride," "Mountain Delight," "Piedmont" and "Summit" have been developed by

Gardner.

Having been raised on a vegetable farm, Gardner can relate to grower problems in his research and in his presentations at meetings.

All commercial tomato growers, both fresh market and processing, are invited to attend the meeting which will start at 9:30 a.m. on January 5. Directions to the meeting place are also avail-

able on request by calling the Extension office at 717/963-6842. Phone reservations will be taken up to January 2.

Other speakers on the program include Dr. Cyril Smith and Dr. Alan MacNab from Penn State University; Tom Jurchak, Lackawanna County Extension Agent and James Garrahan, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.



Randolph Gardner

Plant Breeders

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Harder, Smoother Kernels Needed

Even hard-textured corn, harvested at high moisture and artificially dried at high temperatures, will be filled with enough stress cracks to cause breakage.

Although there are varying opinions on what constitutes the ideal hybrid, both experts say a harder, smoother kernel would be ideal.

That's why McConnell says a high-yielding hybrid with an above average test weight -- not extremely hard textured, but hard enough to take some handling -- may be the answer.

"It also must have good stalk quality and fast dry down, so the farmer has the option of allowing grain to dry in the field," he says.

Because many quality problems with high-yielding corn result from their softer kernels, plant breeders are looking into whether there will be a yield trade-off with harderkerneled corn.

"Harder textured corn tends to be lower yielding," says McConnell. "However, that doesn't mean the relationship can't be broken

with genetic engineering technology."

Pioneer is establishing a special corn breeding program near Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. Breeders there will address grain quality issues and also will develop custom hybrids for industrial and food corn markets.

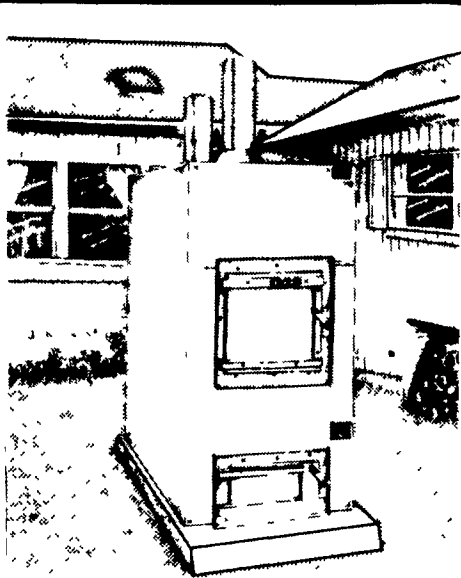
"Our program in Illinois will monitor the status of grain quality throughout our entire breeding program," says McConnell. "Pioneer breeders at other locations will be paying particular attention to the subject.

"We are attempting to improve grain quality as much as we can from the genetic side. We understand the farmer is still going to want yield and standability.

"However, it is always going to be a compromise situation when we try to pull all of the desirable traits together in one package."

McConnell says until research provides some concrete improvements in terms of grain quality, farmers must continue to reduce breakage as best they can through careful harvest, drying and storage of corn for shipment.

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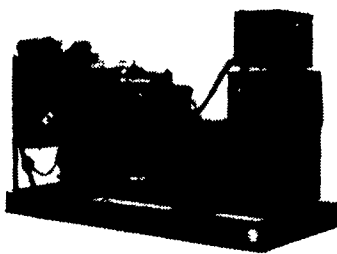
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