

**Tobacco Farming Tips**

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co, and two, the information provided at the show can be of help to tobacco farmers. Besides, the judge didn't want anybody looking over his shoulder." Geoffrey Ranck, president of the Domestic Tobacco Company in Lancaster, judged the exhibits.

About 36 farmers and vocational agriculture students exhibited in 18 classes at the show. Each exhibit consisted of "hands" made out of 16 leaves — 15 tied together by a final leaf.

**Grand champion crop**

"I really enjoy raising tobacco," said Mike Mellott, 21, of Peach Bottom, who raised his Pennsylvania Type 41 filler grand champion crop on 3½ acres.

Winning the grand champion award in the vo-ag category means a lot to Mike. The champion uses special curing with good open ventilation and lots of patience to provide a smooth texture and dark color to the crop, used in cigar and chewing tobacco.

This was Mike's first grand championship, even though he has exhibited during the summer at Solanco and West Lampeter fairs. Mike admits having help from his family and doing a "lot of hard work that really paid off." He wants to plant an additional acre of tobacco this year.

In open class competition, Donald M. Rohrer earned two grand champion awards for Penn 41 binder and wrapper tobacco. J. Richard Groff won a grand champion for the finest middle one-third Maryland-type leaf.

**Beware of crop disease**

In order to grow a healthy crop, farmers must beware of early crop disease or pest infestation. This past season's unusually wet and warm weather spelled near disaster for many area tobacco farmers.

A chief concern is the ravages caused by tobacco aphids, which must be treated early in the season, preferably around July 4. Especially hard hit was the Maryland crop, which comprised more than 8,500 acres, or 1,280 pounds per acre, down 1 million pounds from last

year.

"The dollar acre return will not be as good this year as last," said Claude McKee, tobacco specialist at the University of Maryland. "Take-home dollar per acre is just not there. We've had record rain-fall problems and at the end of the season a great deal of nitrogen wash out."

For Pennsylvania-type tobacco farmers, worldwide consumption and demand are up. But along with the increased demand, farmers must be wary of possible diseases that can be devastating to their plants.

**Ravages of blue mold**

"I shudder to think about the possible ravages of blue mold," said Dr. Arvydas Grybauskas, plant pathologist at the University of Maryland. "The worst blue mold breakout was in 1979, but conditions are right for the disease to start here again. There is potential damage any time in the season,

from transplanting to harvest. And it doesn't take much to spread this. One-million fungus 'pods' can spread in six hours and over long distance."

Grybauskas believes farmers should provide preplanting soil treatment and use standard pest and disease control measures to stop the spread of blue mold, including the compounds Ferbam and Ridamil.

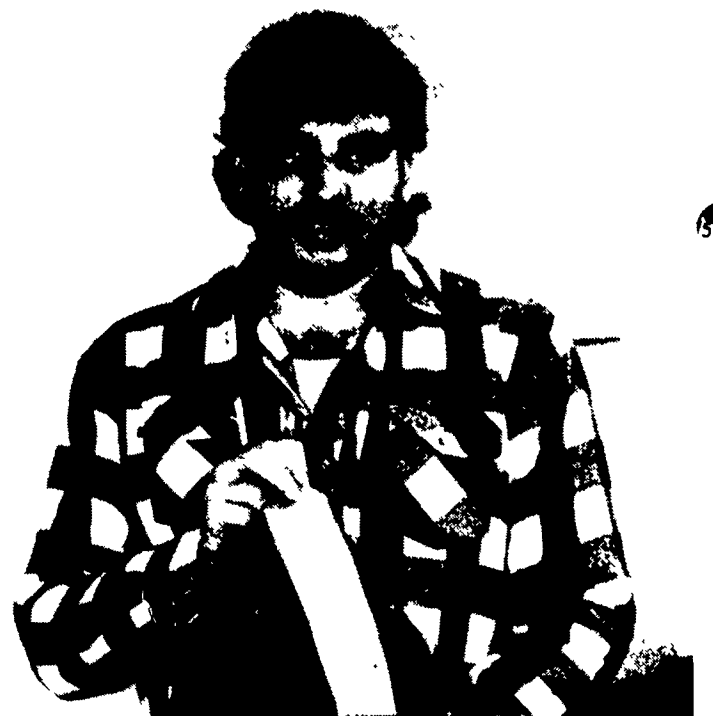
Other plant diseases, including wildfire and angular leaf spot, anthracnose, and damping off should be detected and treated immediately.

A combination of site history, location, fumigation, weed control, proper irrigation, and chemical control should help most farmers. Of prime importance also is sanitary topping and bedding procedures.

**Two new diseases**

Two new diseases also have appeared, baffling many of the experts: rhizoctonia target spot, a

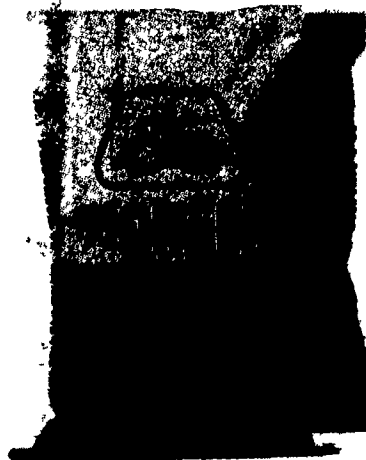
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Mike Mellott displays a hand of his grand champion Pennsylvania Type 41 filler tobacco at the Farm and Home Center Wednesday.

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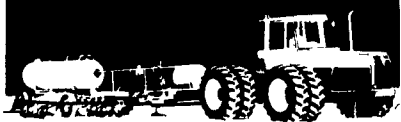
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