

# Fertigation Becomes

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 of the cheapest forms, as far as I know, of (applying) fertilizer." Gault manages about 100 acres of shade and ornamental trees for the wholesale market at the company's headquarters in the rolling hills of southwestern Lancaster County. In 1985, a drip irrigation system was applied on Farm 1, about a half mile north of the main location. The first farm incorporated about 20 acres, including numerous varieties of shade and flowering trees.



Jim Roberts, Roberts Irrigation, San Marcos, Calif., spoke about the importance of nutrient management through drip irrigation at the 1991 Pennsylvania Vegetable Conference in Hershey.

## Injector pumps

On Farm 2, in 1988, a drip irrigation system was installed and 30 more acres of trees planted. The system uses injector pumps with a five-zone electromechanical controller. In 1989, a third farm with an additional drip irrigation system was installed. Soon, more trees will be planted there.

In all, Gault is growing about 1,100 trees per acre on a 10 x 4 center, 40 square feet per plant. It cost them about \$10,000 to get the system set up — roughly \$1 tree or \$1,000 per acre.

The drip irrigation lines are incorporated into the gullies left by disc tilling. The lines, made of flexible polyvinyl chloride (PVC), contains "microflapper emitters" that offer precision water flow and keep the pores from clogging.

According to Gault, the electromechanical controller "tells the solenoid to come on to water that

zone automatically and it also tells it to fertilize automatically." The company uses hydrometers and manually checks them on a periodic basis to determine what amounts of water to apply.

## Good water

Fortunately, said Gault, "we're blessed with good water." Farm 1 has access to 150 gallons per minute. Farm 2 can pump up to 50 gallons per minute and Farm 3 about 30 gallons per minute.

A nutrient solution of 30 percent nitrogen is pumped into the system, using a system developed by Trickle-Eez, based in Biglerville, Pa. Gault is satisfied that further potash and phosphorous require-

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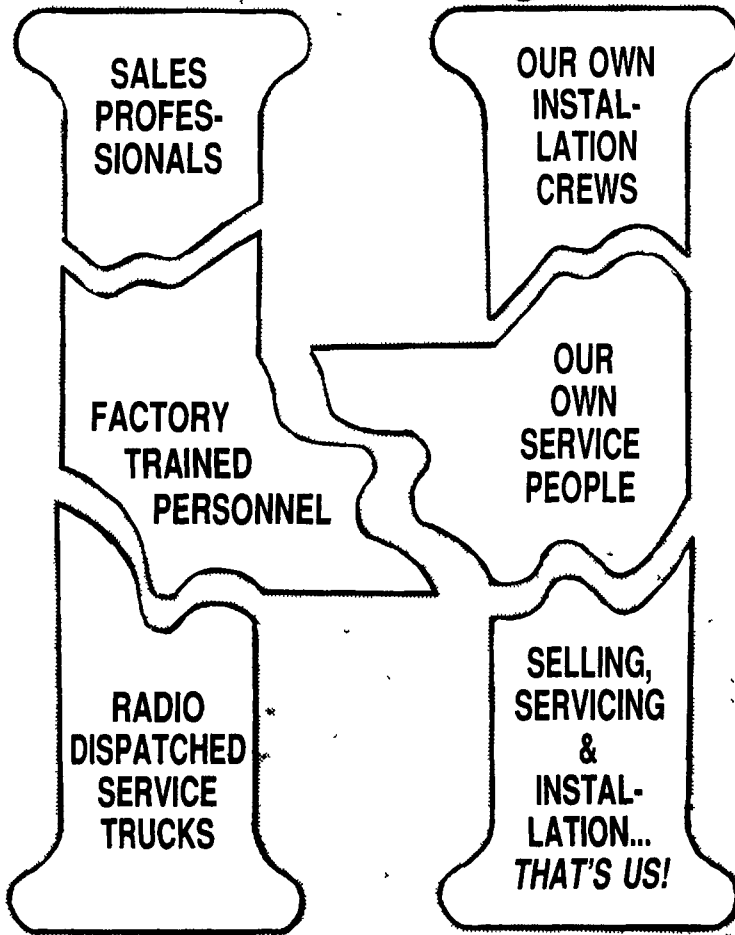
John Gault stands next to a 30 percent nitrogen solution tank (half urea and half ammonium nitrate). The fertilizer is injected into the fertigation system at Farm 1, on which he grows, behind him, Norway maples and magnolias.

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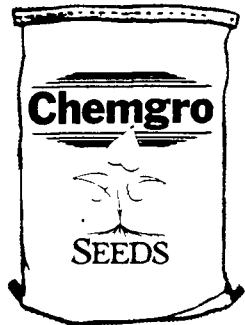
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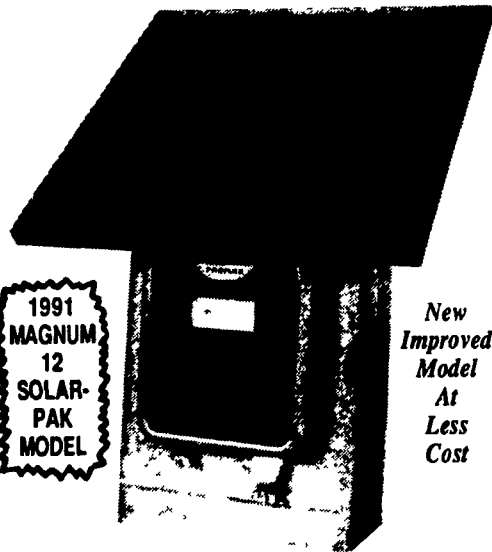


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