

FOR THE WEEK ENDING MAY 5, 1991

GOOD WEEK FOR FIELDWORK: Pennsylvania had a dry week with temperatures slightly above normal. Our respondents indicated that 5 days were suitable for field work. Activities for the week included: repairing fence; hauling manure; spreading fertilizer and lime; spraying fruit trees; maintaining machinery; spring plowing; planting crops; and caring for livestock.

SOIL MOISTURE: By week's end, two percent of our respondents rated the state's topsoil moisture as short, 90 percent rated it adequate, and 8 percent rated it surplus. Three percent of the respondents in the Northern region rated soil moisture as short, 79 percent rated it adequate, and 18 percent rated it surplus. In the Central region, 97 percent rated soil moisture as adequate, and 3 percent rated it surplus. Four percent of our respondents in the Southern region rated soil moisture as short, 93 percent rated it adequate, and 3 percent rated it surplus.

PLOWING: According to our respondents, spring plowing in Pennsylvania was 71 percent completed by week's end, that's 2 percentage points behind last year and the five-year average of 73 percent. Completion of spring plowing was 59, 74, and 82 percent in the Northern, Central, and Southern regions, respectively.

CORN: The Commonwealth's corn crop was 17 percent planted by the end of the week. At this time last year, 19 percent was planted, same as the five-year average. Planting completion by region were: Northern region-7 percent; Central region-13 percent; and Southern region-34 percent.

TOBACCO: Our reporters indicated that 95 percent of Pennsylvania's tobacco beds were planted by the end of the week. Last year, 94 percent of the tobacco beds were planted while the five-year average was 96 percent.

OATS: Oat planting in the Commonwealth was 82 percent complete by week's end. Last year, that figure was 81 percent, same as the five-year average. Planting completion in the three regions were: Northern region-63 percent, Central region-86 percent, and Southern region-98 percent. The oat crop was rated 18 percent excellent, 56 percent good, 22 percent fair, 2 percent poor, and 2 percent very poor.

POTATOES: Our respondents indicated 38 percent of the State's potatoes were planted, 4 percentage points behind last year's progress at this time. The five-year average was 51 percent.

BARLEY AND WHEAT: The State's barley crop progress by the end of the week was 74 percent pre-boot, 24 percent boot and 2 percent heading. Last year's numbers were 75, 18 and 7 percent, respectively for pre-boot, boot and heading. The five-year average was 77 pre-boot, 17 percent boot, and 6 percent heading. Wheat progress was 87 percent pre-boot, 12 percent boot, and 1 percent headed, same as last year's progress. The five-year average was 91, 9, and none respectively. The wheat crop was rated 21 percent excellent, 53 percent good, 21 percent fair, 3 percent poor, and 2 percent very poor.

FRUIT: Twenty-two percent of the peach trees, according to our respondents, were in the pre-pink stage at week's end. Eleven percent were in the pink and 67 percent was in the full bloom or past stage. Last year at this time, 29 percent of the peaches were in the pre-pink stage, while 11 percent were pink and 60 percent were full bloom or past. Cherries were 19 percent pre-pink, 11 percent pink, and 70 percent full bloom, by week's end. Cherry pre-pink, pink and full bloom numbers respectively for last year were: 28, 7, and 65 percent. Apples were 25 percent pre-pink, 21 percent pink, and 54 percent full bloom or past. Last year, apples were 31 percent pre-pink, 19 percent pink, and 50 percent full bloom or past.

HAY AND PASTURE: Alfalfa hay stands in the State were rated 71 percent good, 28 percent fair, and 1 percent poor. Clover-timothy stands were rated good by 70 percent, fair by 29 percent, and poor by 1 percent. The quality of feed being obtained from pastures was rated good by 62 percent of our respondents, fair by 35 percent, poor by 2 percent and very poor by 1 percent.

U.S. AS OF APRIL 28: Predominantly dry weather across the Southwest allowed field work to progress while rains, generally in excess of one inch through the midwest, slowed planting. Temperatures averaged near normal across the nation, promoting seasonal greening. Corn planting progressed to 16 percent in the 17 major producing states, compared to 21 percent planted last year and a five-year average of 24 percent. Heading of winter wheat advanced to 28 percent nationwide, 15 percentage points ahead of last year's progress at this time, and 18 percentage points ahead of the five-year average.

Eastern Tent Caterpillars Not Gypsy Moth

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Spring in Maryland usually is announced by the appearance of Eastern tent caterpillar nests in trees across the state.

Whether in trees along roadsides or in residential areas, the tent caterpillar, a native of North America, is everywhere.

Wild cherry trees are the favorite host, along with apple, crabapple, plum, peach, rose, hawthorne, and certain shade trees.

Eastern tent caterpillar infestations are often confused with gypsy moth infestation. Gypsy moth caterpillars hatch about two weeks later, do not produce silken webbing along the trunks of trees or silken tents in the branches of trees, and are more commonly found on oak trees than are Eastern tent caterpillars.

Fully grown caterpillars of the two species do not look alike.

Tent caterpillars are up to 2½ inches long, with a solid white stripe along the back, and a row of pale blue oval spots along each side. The body is covered by long, fine, light brown hairs.

Gypsy moth caterpillars are about the same size, but are distinguished by five pairs of blue spots, followed by six pairs of red spots on their backs. No other caterpillar has these distinct markings. The caterpillars are covered by long black hairs and many people suffer allergic reactions to contact with the hairs.

Eastern tent caterpillar eggs usually start to hatch in early to mid-April and the young caterpillars, which are only about ¼ inch long when they hatch, immediately begin building the characteristic silk tents where tree branches join together.

Caterpillars leave the tent only to feed, and continue to enlarge the tent as they grow.

When fully grown, they leave the trees to search for hiding places

to spin cocoons. After two weeks in the cocoon, adult moths emerge to mate and the female lays eggs. The egg masses are dark, shiny grey and are laid in a band around a small branch. There is only one generation each year.

If caterpillars are abundant, they may eat all the leaves on a tree. While this may weaken the tree, it seldom kills it.

Defoliated trees should be watered and fertilized, wherever possible. Physical removal of the tents is a good control practice.

High value ornamental plants, or landscape trees that have been defoliated two or three years, can be sprayed with an insecticide during the time the caterpillars are active. Once caterpillars leave the tree, control is much more difficult.

Because the tent caterpillar is a native North American insect, outbreaks are usually controlled by naturally occurring parasites or predators.

In contrast, the gypsy moth is not a native insect, it was introduced to North America from Europe, and has few natural parasites or predators. Gypsy moth caterpillars defoliate and may kill oaks and other hardwood trees in urban residential or rural areas.

To reduce widespread tree mortality, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with federal and county agencies, conducts a statewide gypsy moth suppression program.

Each homeowner should take steps to limit gypsy moth damage to landscape trees or shrubs.

For information on ways to control Eastern tent caterpillar or gypsy moth, call your County Cooperative Extension Office or Dr. Robert Rabaglia, Forest Pest Management Section, Maryland Department of Agriculture, (301) 841-5922.

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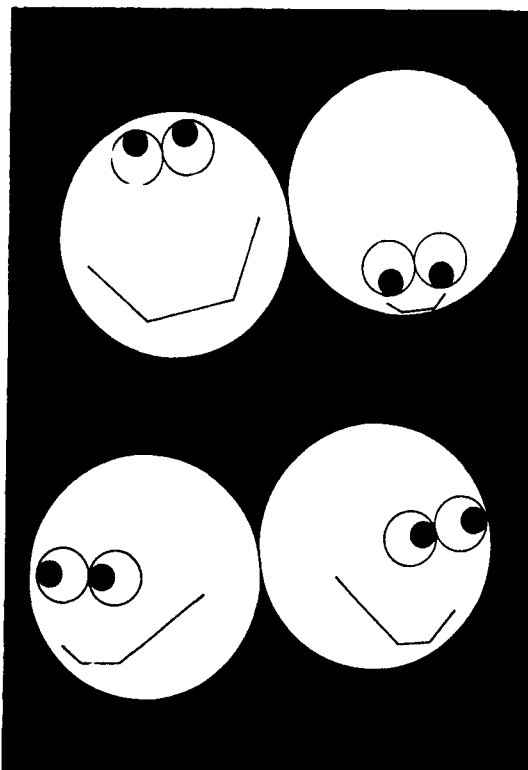
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