

# Ag Research Aims To Conserve Resources

ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.)— Different colors of plastic mulch that may help reduce pesticide spraying. A trickle irrigation system that conserves water. Raspberry and orchard production systems that could reduce labor requirements and increase yields.

These are just a few of the ongoing research projects you can see at Penn State's Ag Progress Days, August 17-19.

This year's theme is "Conserving Our Resources Through Science." Visitors to the event can learn how agricultural research is

helping to improve their food and fiber while enhancing farm efficiency and protecting the environment.

Thirty-minute bus tours of the horticulture, plant pathology, agronomy and entomology research farms and the USDA Pasture Research Laboratory will highlight a variety of projects designed to increase production efficiency and yields, reduce reliance on chemical pesticides and fertilizers, and conserve natural resources such as soil and water.

"Research such as this is essen-

tial if we are to minimize the environmental impact of agricultural production and maintain the profitability of farming," said Dr. John Ayers, professor of plant pathology in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences and the tour coordinator.

Among the projects featured is an evaluation of different colors of plastic mulch for pest control. Researchers have found that some crop-eating insects are attracted to certain colors. By placing pesticide-laced bait with colored mulch in a small area, producers may be

able to kill the pest without spraying insecticide on an entire field.

By taking the tour, you also can learn about fruit and vegetable varieties with natural resistance to diseases and insects; using biodegradable mulches, such as recycled newspaper, to suppress weeds and reduce herbicides; soil and plant nitrogen testing, with an eye toward optimizing nitrogen fertilizer applications; and testing the effectiveness of natural predators and parasites as alternative insect controls.

The free bus tours are offered every 20 minutes from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. all three days of the event. Tours continue until 7 p.m. during extended hours on Wednesday, August 18.

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