

Weather's Right, So Idea Garden Goes In

ANDY ANDREWS

Lancaster Farming Staff

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)

— *Planting fever* — n. 1 a: *The incredible urge, when the weather turns just right, to plant. b: the state of mind when planting.*

About 12 Lancaster County Master Gardeners know what planting fever was like this past week. The rains passed through late in the day Tuesday and the sun broke out clearly Wednesday morning. The sun warmed things up.

It was irresistible.

To Idea Garden coordinator and Master Gardener Hans Lienhard, it was warm enough, even in the 60s, to take a chance that we won't have a frost. So out came the 1,200 plants in 14 varieties, obtained from Good Harvest Vegetable Farm and Greenhouse, Strasburg, to adorn the entrance and side of the Farm and Home Center.

The Master Gardeners — spades, shovels, and wheelbarrows

in hand — moved mulch and dug away, beginning at about 8 a.m. Wednesday. It only took about four hours before all the varieties for the annual Idea Garden were planted.

For some of the plants, such as the salvias, cold weather, especially a frost, could have a dramatic effect. But many of the perennials are winter hardy and could take a little nip now and then.

"We're hoping the weather will hold up," said Lienhard, pushing a spade to the already wet earth. Geraniums, petunias, salvias, marigolds, Alyssum, and more will bloom in the coming months around the building perimeter of the Farm and Home Center.

Already, the cold winter has had an effect on the perennials, according to Lienhard, delaying their bloom by more than two weeks. "But in the long run," he said, "it all evens out."

"Things are coming up much

faster now that the sun's out."

Last year, the gardeners put the Idea Garden in late, because of unusually cold weather into May. But this year, the overall cold weather "kind of slowed us down and we were delayed in getting to work on the ground," he said.

Two weeks ago the gardeners were out tilling up the ground and working in peat moss. Also, a 10-10-10 fertilizer was worked in the ground for season-long fertilization.

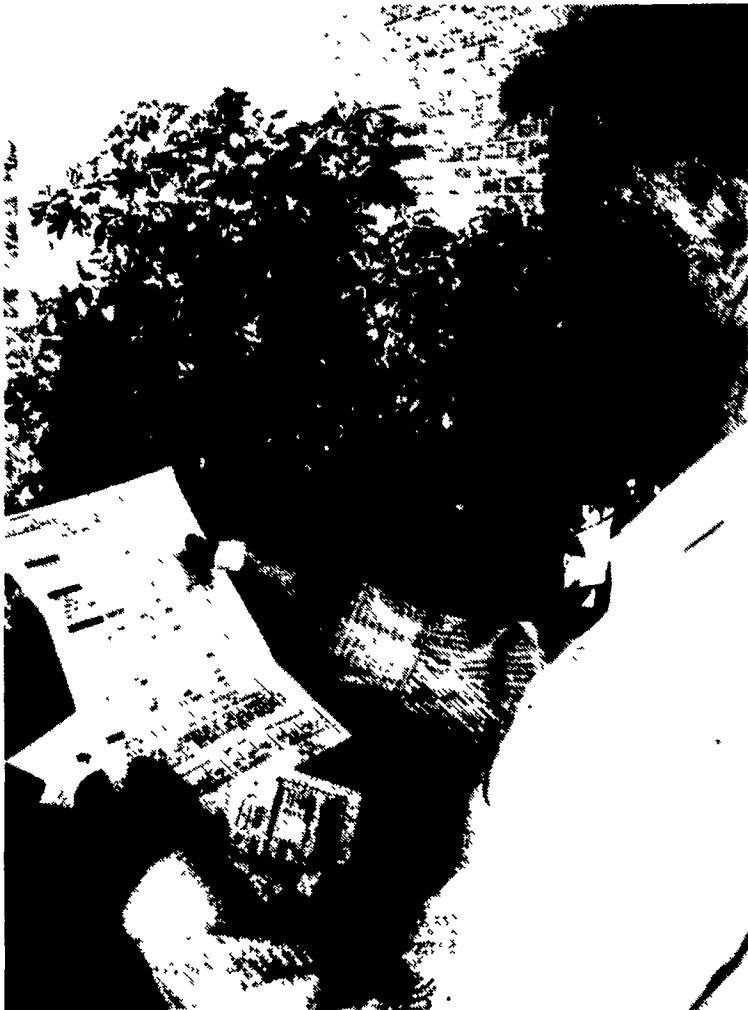
This was the first year, according to Lienhard, that the gardeners did a soil test, which came back nearly average on pH, but some soil additions, including lime, were needed.

An open house to showcase the Idea Garden will be held in August, said Lienhard.

For many who want to start gardens of their own, this is the place to get some ideas of what will work, including the hardier perennials.



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Lancaster County Master Gardeners know what planting fever was like this past week. The rains passed through late in the day Tuesday and the sun broke out clearly Wednesday morning. From left, Hans Lienhard, Elaine Fisher, and Pam Daughton work mulch into the garden.