

Good Conservation Practices Make Good Neighbors, According To Chester County Farmer

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ing maintains that using a cover crop is necessary to ensure soil is held in place.

Horning grows about 75 acres of corn and 55 acres of alfalfa. On the alfalfa, he maintains a 3-4 year stand. He rotates the contour strip crops with corn and hay. Alternating the strips provides the best hedge against erosion and the rotation promotes standability and production.

As part of the conservation plan, initiated in May 1992, a 316,000-gallon manure storage tank was installed in July 1992. The tank is emptied twice a year, every six to seven months. It was

put up with a cost-share program available through the Chester County Conservation District. Horning indicated that since installing the manure system they don't use any starter fertilizer on crops.

During a recent interview at his farm, Horning said he is concerned about possible new legislation farmers will have to face down the pike. Staying ahead of compliance will ensure good relations among the neighbors, he said. The attention to the management aspect of runoff, soil containment, and other conservation aspects will help him, he said, avoid problems in the future.

And while many environmentalists complain about the nutrient management and pesticide practices of farmers, the homeowners have "no legislation at all" to comply with regarding the many tons of pesticides and nutrients placed on lawns.

While more of the county is continually being developed, keeping relations with the neighbors healthy and working to ensure an environmental partnership is vital to DH Lone Hill Farm, according to Horning.



Dairying is the mainstay at DH Lone Hill Farm. The Horning family take care of 60 registered and ID grade Holstein, in addition to some Red and Whites. There are about 50 replacement calves in the herd. The Pa. DHIA herd average for the farm stands at about 20,000 pounds, 3.7f, 3.2p, for a herd total of 685 pounds fat and 624 pounds protein. Here, David, right, looks over a breeding records chart with Conrad Smoker.



For his dairy, Horning looks for cows that have good production and good overall health, with adequate udders and good feet and legs.



The original Red and White, on the 352-day lactation, recorded 30,000 pounds of milk, he said.

Purchase Lawn Care Products Carefully

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.)—Before you resign yourself to having another mediocre lawn this year—or to spending a hefty part of your salary to improve it—take a few tips from a turfgrass specialist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"Revitalizing your lawn doesn't need to be a costly, time-consuming process," said Dr. Peter Landschoot, assistant professor of turfgrass science. "It's more a question of correctly evaluating the trouble spots before you invest in solutions.

"One of the first steps to getting a healthy lawn is to take a soil test, which will tell you how much fertilizer and lime are required," he said.

The Penn State soil fertility test, available for \$6 at Penn State Cooperative Extension offices across the state, will help you determine what nutrients your lawn needs and when to apply them.

The least costly way to control weeds is to follow good lawn management practices designed to prevent reinfestation.

"A sound program of mowing, watering and fertilizing is your best defense against weed invasion," Landschoot said. "Nevertheless, many lawns need some extra help."

"Before purchasing herbicides, first identify the weeds you want to control. If you're unsure what the weed is or how to control it, don't just guess what product would be best. Bring a sample of the weed to a lawn and garden center or to your county cooperative extension office and get a professional recommendation.

"Most weed problems can be reduced by using a weed-and-feed-product—an herbicide and

fertilizer rolled into one," he said. "It's worth the few extra dollars to rent a spreader, because this will give you even distribution. Make sure that you know what type of weeds are in your lawn before choosing a product. Not all weed-and-feed products are the same."

When it comes to fertilizers and herbicides, more isn't necessarily better, Landschoot said.

"Follow the instructions on the label. Not only are you wasting your money if you apply more than the recommended amount, but you could damage the grass."

Timing is important for weed control. "To combat crabgrass, you have to apply a herbicide before the weed germinates," Landschoot said. "Some people use forsythia bloom as an indicator, but a good rule of thumb is to apply a preemergence herbicide before April 15 in southeastern Pennsylvania, during late April in central Pennsylvania and between May 1 and May 15 in the northwest corner of the state.

"For broadleaf weeds, such as dandelion and clover, wait until the weeds appear before treating

them," Landschoot said.

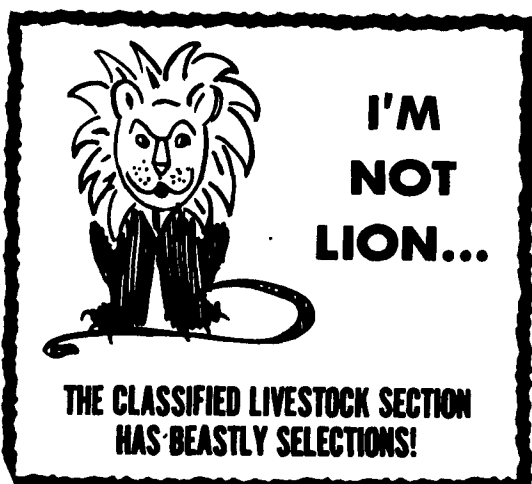
Before purchasing grass seed to replenish thin areas, homeowners should assess why the grass disappeared in the first place. "Ask yourself if the lawn was too wet, too shady or poor in fertility before you spend time and money trying to replace the grass," he said.

"The best time to reseed is in late summer or fall, when there isn't too much competition from weeds. If you apply herbicides in spring, you can damage seedlings."

"When it's time to reseed, don't just throw seed on the lawn," he said. "First, get rid of weeds, break up the soil surface and put down the seed so it comes into good contact with the soil. Place straw mulch over the area so the soil doesn't dry out."

Choose a high quality seed or seed mixture adapted to the site conditions, said Landschoot.

For more information about specific varieties suited to your area, contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in your county.



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