

# What Will Be Tomorrow's Tomato Plant?

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have air conditions in N.C., however, that make it hard to grow an early variety. And they have similar disease problems as growers here.

For N.C. growers (many who produce about 5-10 acres of fresh table crop), the best way to get good production is to have a "good, large, healthy plant in the field," said Gardener.

Most seeds are germinated about Feb. 20-25 and transplants are placed in the field from April 5-10. Using a system of large plants that have already flowered has enabled the growers to get early production.

North Carolina State University is known for the development of the "Mountain" varieties of fresh market tomato, including Mountain Spring and Mountain Fresh.

Work began in the 1980s to develop a variety that could tolerate cooler or hotter growing conditions, promote uniform ripening, and work on obtaining a desired glossy fruit. Importantly, "growers want big fruit — that's what they can get money for," said Gardener.

The earlier, the better. It shows up in how much growers can obtain for their crop if available for consumers early in June. Growers a few years back were paid about \$50 per bushel for the earlier crop.

Most earliness in tomatoes is based on early flowering.

As a result, more work is under way in determining how to get a shortened fruit maturation (SFM) cycle, which is the decrease in number of days from flowering to when fruit starts to ripen.

Gardener showed several varieties that showed great promise on SFM development. Many were crossed with early maturing cherry tomatoes. The key was to combine the genes of the SFM varieties with the large fruit set varieties and keep the SFM characteristics in line.

After obtaining the genetic line, Gardener admitted he was impressed with the fact that a good tasting tomato was also obtained.

Research also examined some of the cull factors of tomatoes — those characteristics that resulted in culled tomatoes. They included the primary factor, rough blossom scar, and fruit cracking. Many varieties were developed with good resistance to fruit cracking, but the blossom scars are still a challenge.

Varieties were developed for other characteristics, as well, including high temperature stress, better vine-ripening, resistance to foliar diseases such as early and late blight and fusarium wilt, and extended shelf life. The foliar diseases were developed with good resistance to fruit cracking, but the blossom scars are still a challenge.

Some growers return to the fields on a 5-day schedule to battle early blight. And this gets expensive. As a result, varieties were

developed to cut the application frequencies to every 10 days.

Work is under way also on developing compact plant types, which allow spreading on a mulch row without staking. This compact growth system is still being researched and could be close enough economically to the staked system to be viable.

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## USB To Examine Return On Checkoff Dollar Investment

**ANDY ANDREWS**  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
**CARLISLE (Cumberland Co.)**  
— The chairman of the United Soybean Board (USB) was clear in his intentions: find out exactly what the return on soybean dollar investment is.

John Becherer, CEO of the United Soybean Board, told producers at Tuesday's Pennsylvania Crops Conference that the board has undertaken its own fact-finding mission, with the aid of Texas A&M University, to find

out what the return on soybean checkoff dollars is for the producers, and share that information with producers.

The information would be available to producers in about one year, said Becherer.

About 60 producers were on hand at the soybean portion of the Pennsylvania Crops Conference in Carlisle to hear the long-range strategic plan of the USB.

The goal of the organization: raise the total U.S. soybean exports to 60 percent of the world market,

and market about 350 million bushels of soybeans per year to other parts of the world, including the southeast Asian rim countries. Also, a part of the plan involves increasing new uses of soybeans by 300 million bushels per year by the year 2005, of which would be an increase in utilization of U.S. domestic market share of soybeans by 150 million bushels. The board plans to evaluate new uses of soybeans through research and promotion.

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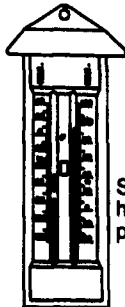
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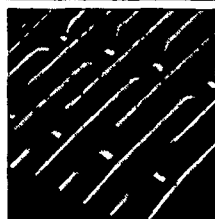
Shows "at a glance" the lowest and highest temperatures since the last reset plus the present temperature.



#### FLOORING

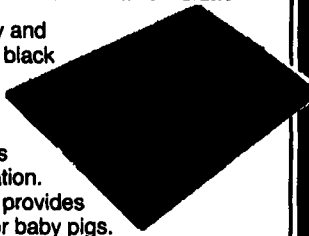


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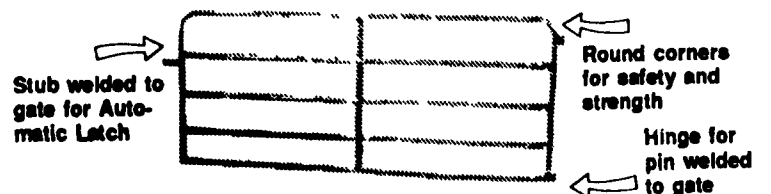
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