

Pumpkins Sprout Big Business In Pa.

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LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)
—Pumpkin production is big business in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. Pumpkins are second only to sweet corn in number of vegetable farms growing the crop, according to a recent survey, indicated one Penn State expert.

In 1996, 54 percent of vegetable growers grew pumpkins, according to Dr. Alan MacNab, plant pathologist from Penn State.

MacNab spoke about some of the methods growers can use to manage diseases in pumpkins early this year at the first Penn State-sponsored Mid-Atlantic Pumpkin School held in March at the Eden Resort Inn and Conference Center in Lancaster.

The school focused on pumpkin

production and provided growers and industry representatives with the latest information on culture and management techniques for the crop, according to Tim Elkner, Lancaster horticulture agent, who also helped coordinate the school.

Dr. Charles McClurg, department of horticulture at the University of Maryland, provided information on how to select for good quality pumpkins, how to properly handle them, and proper storage methods.

"Start with good quality pumpkins," noted McClurg. "To produce good quality, select a variety that has characteristics you desire. Use cultural practices that contribute to good quality fruit."

Handle strength and integrity are important, indicated McClurg. It's important to select varieties

accordingly. In general, smaller-fruited types have better handles than large, "face-type" varieties.

When handling or moving pumpkins, use as much care as possible to avoid physical damage. Throwing and dropping fruit can break off handles and cause puncture injury to fruit walls from other handles.

For direct sales, McClurg told growers to try to have parking near the pumpkin areas so buyers don't have to carry their purchases very far. Provide carts or wagons for customers.

Also, sort through your pumpkin displays periodically to remove damaged and diseased fruit. Outdoor displays should be

set up in an area with good drainage so the fruit are not sitting in mud or water following rain.

Bob Rouse, University of Maryland, provided data on materials and methods used in growing pumpkins on plastic mulch.

Rouse also provided his "ABC's" of pumpkin growing:

- A is for Advise.
- B is for Bees — at least one strong hive per acre.
- C is for Cover crops — use hairy vetch, rye, small grains, etc.
- D is for Disease management. Growers should learn to control black rot, powdery mildew, downy mildew, plectosporium, phytophthora, soft rot, virus, etc., using a total program.

• E is for the EB236 Vegetable Recommendation Book from Maryland.

• F is for Fertility — do not overdo it.

• G is for Great Wye Pumpkin Patch or green, healthy leaves.

• H is for learning about Harvest and storage.

• I is for using Irrigation when needed.

• J is for the Jack of all trades — the Jack-Be-Little varieties.

• K is for who pumpkins impress the most — Kids.

• L is for Lime to correct soil pH.

• M is for Marketing. Learn to do your homework.

(Turn to Page A21)



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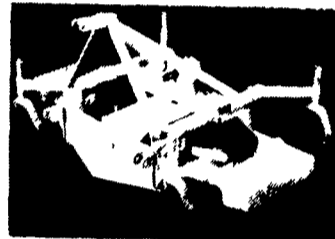
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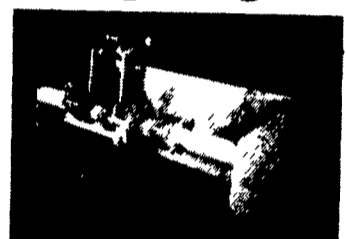
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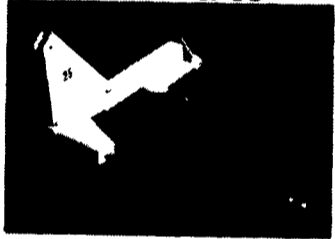
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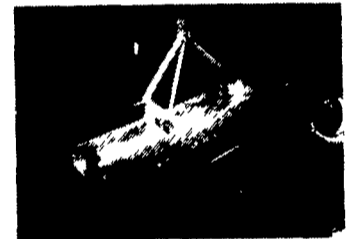
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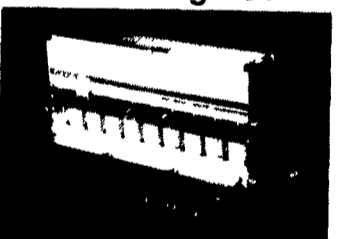
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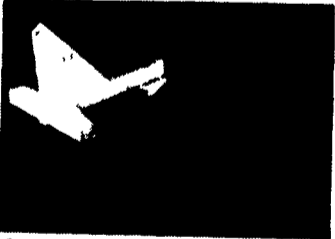
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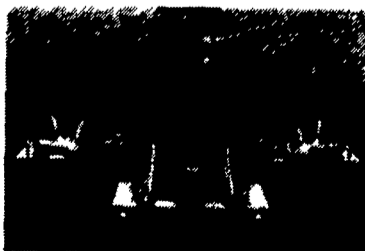
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