

# Radon Myths And Realities

SPRINGFIELD (Delaware Co.) — Radon is a source of radiation health risk that potentially affects everyone. As a part of natural background radiation, it contributes an average of 55% of the total radiation dose received by people in the United States every year. Radon exposure is easy to test for and to prevent. To find out about radon, what radon is, its health effects, how you can get test for it, and what you can do about it, plan to attend "Radon in the Home: Myths and Realities," an educational program presented by Penn State Cooperative Extension. The program will be held on Thursday, May 29 from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. at Delaware County Extension Office, Environmental Center, Smedley Park, 20 Paper Mill Road, Springfield. To register, call (215) 690-2655, by May 27.

post, and licorice root mulches have injured Ericaceous plants such as Rhododendron, Pieris, Azalea, and Kalmia. This may be from the chemicals that leach from them or because nitrogen is removed from the soil as they decompose.

Any questions regarding the above article can be addressed to Tom Becker, Penn State Cooperative Extension at (717) 840-7408.

inserts, colored Sunday comics, or sections with heavy colored printing. Chemicals and heavy metals such as lead and cadmium used in the colored printing process can leach into the soil and may cause toxic problems with plants or their uptake.

When using mulches, avoid overmulching with dense mulches like sawdust or unshredded leaves. Use no more than 2 inches thick; medium density mulches like shredded bark can be 2-4 inches thick; while loose mulches like straw can be used to 6 inches thick.

Supplemental nitrogen should be applied with mulches that have an especially high carbon to nitrogen ratios (sawdust, wood chips, corn cobs, etc.). Microorganisms that decompose these materials absorb nitrogen from the soil during the decomposition process. This can create a nitrogen deficiency in mulched plants. Apply about 2 pounds of nitrogen (20 pounds of a 10-6-4 fertilizer) per 1000 square feet at time the mulch is applied. If the growth of the mulched plant is reduced, or if the leaves appear to become a light green, reapply the nitrogen as needed.

There have been reports that cocoa bean hulls, mushroom com-

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**Tom Becker**



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Organic mulches ultimately break down by bacteria and fungi in the soil. Organic mulches include bark (should be well composted), shredded hardwood, pine, redwood nuggets and cedar. Sawdust (should be well composted), woodchips, peat chips, pine needles, straw, salt hay, shredded and leaves and grass clippings, and newspaper are other organic mulches.

When using newspapers and grocery store tabloids in a vegetable or flower garden, use four or five layers of paper laid around plants and anchored down with a shovelful of soil or rocks/bricks/stones on the corner. The paper will decompose throughout the season. Additional layers may need to be added to prevent weeds from emerging.

Avoid walking on the paper, especially after a rain or soaking. Wet-to-dry paper becomes brittle and tears easily. Paper remains can be rototilled in the garden after the end of the growing season.

Shredded newspaper can also be used. Apply the shredded paper in three to four inch depths.

Newsprint with colored pictures can be used with little problems. Avoid glossy colored paper

# You Ask, You Answer

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**ANSWER** — This answers the following two questions: Betty Jakum, Littlestown, wanted the Pennsylvania German folk healing book called "The Long Lost Friend," by J. Hohman and Polly Weiss, Woxall, wanted to know where to find the "See Sally Run," and "See Jack Run," books. Thanks to a reader who wrote that Calhouns Books specializes in old rare out-of-print books. Call or write to ask for the book you want to Calhouns Books, Rts 5 & 20, Geneva, NY 14456; (315) 789-8599.

**ANSWER** — F. Hoffman, Shermansdale, wanted to know where to find old-fashioned white sweet potato or the plants (no yams). E. M. Martin of Shippensburg has plants to sell and will ship UPS. Write to them at 133 Smithdale Rd, Shippensburg, PA 17257.

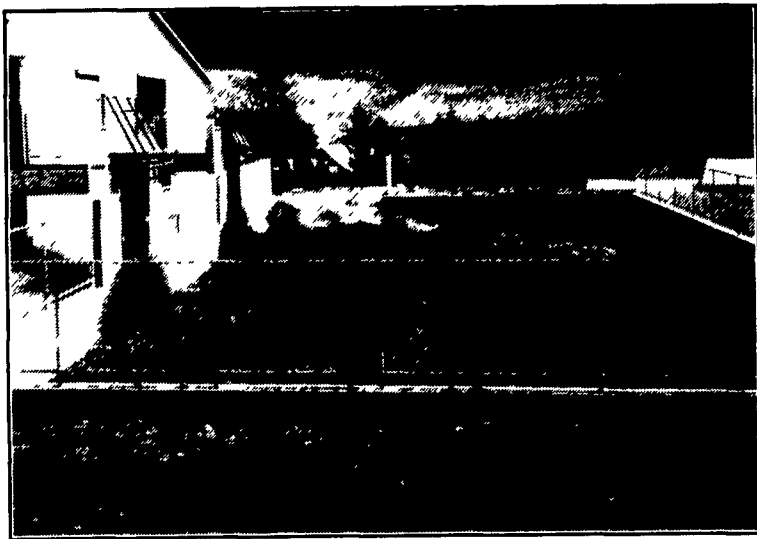
**ANSWER** — William Freed, Philadelphia, wanted to know who sells decals of horses, cows, and chickens to put on trailers, trucks, and milk cans. Paste on decals should be from 6-15-inches and be for metal or wood. Thanks to Tom Armstrong of Perkasio for writing that a comprehensive catalog of decals, patches, signs, etc. of domestic animals is available at the following two places: Breeders Sign Service, P.O. Box 1502, Topeka, KS 66601 and Howard Johnstone, Rt. 1, Maple Hill, KS or call (913) 256-6311.

**ANSWER** — Here's a unique answer in response to stopping a hen from breaking the eggs in a nest. Richard Knouse, Liverpool, writes that his uncle used to get small balloons like those used for balloon animals) and blow up and tie off an egg-sized piece (make sure it's blown up very tight) and place them in the nest (white is best as fowls see colors). After several "eggs" blow up, most birds will stop pecking eggs at least for a while. The noise may be upsetting to the flock and affect production.

Although Sarah Zook of Litzitz wrote the putting Free choice oyster shells with the chickens help her flock, several people wrote that the only solution is "to grab the chicken that breaks the eggs, cut off her head and roast her for supper" in the words of William Dennies of Hamburg, NY.

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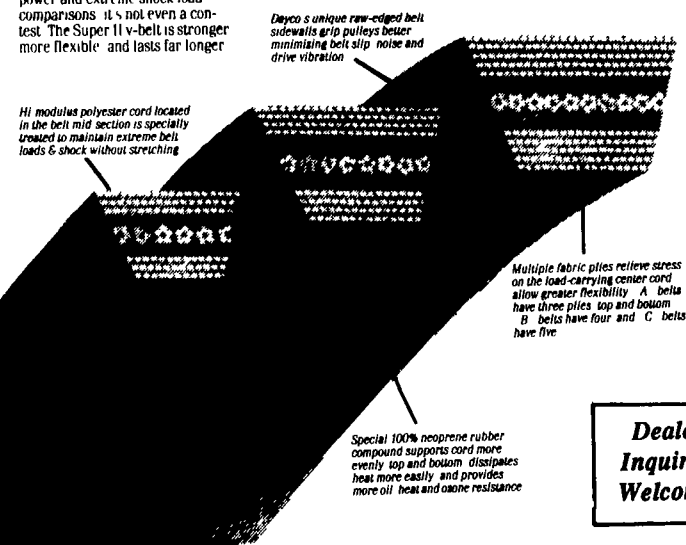
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