

To Control Sweet Corn Weeds, What's A Grower To Use?

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LANDISVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — Growers don't have a lot of herbicides labeled for use in sweet corn — and what's out there requires careful management to be used properly on the fields, according to a Penn State research station manager.

John Yocum, who manages the Penn State Extension Southeast Research Laboratory in Landisville, reviewed the work on variety and herbicide trials on sweet corn at the station.

Yocum spoke to about 30 growers and agri-industry representatives during the first Southeast Pennsylvania Sweet Corn Twilight Meeting at the Landisville station early in August.

Growers are limited to two product groups, according to Yocum. One is Dual/Lasso, which unfortunately misses the triazine-resistant lambsquarters that pose more of a control challenge for growers. The other product, Tough, if it ever

gets labeled for sweet corn, does an excellent job in controlling lambsquarters, according to Yocum.

Tough is sprayed post-emergence. While different herbicides can have injurious effects on corn (particularly shrunken-2 varieties), Yocum noted that Tough looks fairly safe to use.

Other products that can be used on corn include 2,4-D, which works well in control of lambsquarters and bindweed, and Bicep.

The station made use of a shielded sprayer in test applications, working well to limit drift and maximize use of material on weeds.

Growers could someday see a Roundup-resistant sweet corn variety. Already, work is being done to develop Roundup-resistant potatoes. One of the reasons, Yocum believes, that it is taken so long is the general horticultural industry's resistance to some of the more wide-ranging breakthroughs in genetic engineering.



About 30 growers and agri-industry representatives attended the first Southeast Pennsylvania Sweet Corn Twilight Meeting at the station early in August. There, they tasted a variety of sweet corn grown at the station.



Growers had a chance to taste the varieties of sweet corn grown at the station. Here, Cedar Eckert, New Oxford, tastes a sample.

While agronomic growers of corn silage or shelled corn simply "run it through a machine," sweet corn growers "worry about flag leaves, depth of kernel, fullness of ear — all those things," said Yocum.

Sweet corn growers are concerned about ramifications of the use of pesticides on crops to be consumed by humans. But some of the more disease-resistant crop varieties being grown, along with the application of IPM and other strategies, are helping to produce a crop that is environmentally safe at a less expensive cost.

Another concern is residues. Tough virtually has no residue, unlike other materials, Yocum noted. But the product is more effective when the weeds are caught at a smaller growth

stage, postemergence, said Yocum.

At the meeting, a demonstration on vacuum seeders, for more accurate seeding rate, was provided by a local equipment dealer.

Tim Elkner, Lancaster horticulture agent, also spoke at the August meeting regarding integrated pest management (IPM) strategies. But growers should use a healthy plant to start with, as the first line of defense in controlling disease and insect challenges.

"You should match the type of soil you are using to the crop grown in order to get the maximum growth out of that crop," Elkner said.

An important step is to carefully monitor insect pressure, such as corn earworm, through

the use of traps. Scouting for earworms, fall armyworms, Japanese beetles, and other sweet corn pests is essential in a successful IPM program. Growers can find out what kinds of traps are most useful by contacting their local extension agent.

Growers can also make use of disease and insect forecasting methods, including Blight-cast from Penn State, to reduce the use of pesticides and save on applications.

At the August meeting, which reviewed the 20 varieties of sweet corn grown at the station, Elkner told those attending to talk to seed industry representatives and other growers.

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