

Eastern Shore Poultry Manure Successful As Poinsettia Potting Mix

(Continued from Page A1)

similar results have been obtained with watermelons and chrysanthemums. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation funded the Future Harvest research

"This project was designed to demonstrate the usefulness and benefits of composted poultry litter as an alternative to commercially available potting soils and mixes for poinsettia production," said Dr. John C. Bouwkamp, Future Harvest research director and associate professor in the Department of Horticulture at the University of Maryland. "Clearly we have done so, and clearly nursery and greenhouse supplies and growers will have to take note and consider the important implications for their respective businesses for future holiday seasons. This could be a true horticultural and environmental breakthrough for the holidays."

To evaluate poinsettia growth

and quality, Bouwkamp used four Paul Eke Ranch poinsettia varieties, comparing 18 composted blended mixes against two commercially produced potting soils. Three different levels of fertilizer were applied in each case. Besides poultry litter, the composted blends included biosolids or yard debris. At harvest, plant height, width and branches were evaluated and graded on a scale of one to 10. The poultry litter compost mixes consistently produced plants of good to premium wholesale quality, better in many instances than the commercial grade mixes.

Bouwkamp and his colleague, Dr. Catherine Ku, held an open house at the university to share their encouraging findings with poinsettia growers, composting business officials and county

extension agents.

"Using composted litter in potting mixes can provide a viable economic alternative for mid-Atlantic nurseries and greenhouses and a profitable waste management option for the poultry industry," said Tom Simpson, coordinator of Chesapeake Bay Agricultural Programs for the Maryland Department of Agriculture. "It can also prevent the destruction of the wetlands during the mining of peat now used for potting mixes. We are very encouraged."

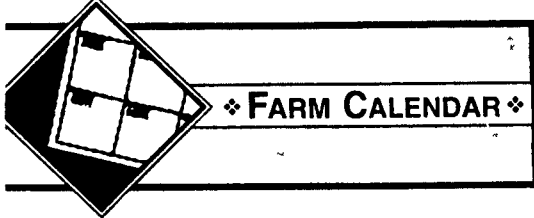
Future Harvest started its Poultry Initiative three years ago in cooperation with the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The purpose was to devise and demonstrate economics and

environmentally sound methods for reusing poultry litter. In addition to its evaluation of composted litter for plants, the project has developed a composting system which *Mid-Atlantic Poultry Farmer* magazine has characterized as "a model of human ingenuity." Project participants are now working to identify potential markets, lowest cost composting technologies, and consistent sources of supply.

Future Harvest is an effort by local farmers, residents, agricultural and environmental groups to promote and foster the economics, environmental and social sustainability of Maryland and Delaware agriculture.

The Project focused on the poultry industry in recognition of its heavy economic and envi-

ronmental impact on the Eastern Shore. The industry turns out more than 600 million broilers each year and generate some \$1.5 billion in gross wholesale sales. Those same broilers generate 725,000 tons of poultry litter, including 25,000 tons of nitrogen and 24,000 tons of phosphorous. Excess amounts of phosphorous in soil due to the application of poultry wastes, have been suggested as a cause for the recent outbreak of *Pfiesteria piscida* in Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore tributaries. Reuse of composted litter in home gardens, organic vegetable crop production, nursery and greenhouse potting mixtures or for application on land with nutrient deficiencies could become a profitable and environmentally sound alternative for disposing of poultry wastes.



◆ FARM CALENDAR ◆

(Continued from Page A10)

Tuesday, January 6

Pesticide Update Meeting For Ephrata Area Young Farmers, Family Time Restaurant, 6:45 p.m.

Franklin County Dairy Day, Kauffman's Community Center.

Bucks/Montgomery County Dairy Day, Family Heritage Restaurant, Franconia, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

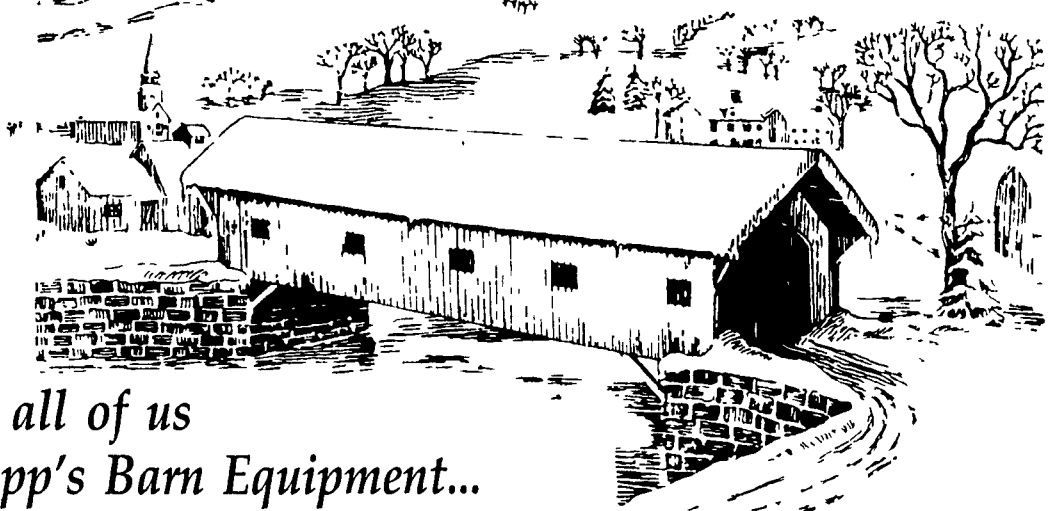
Lancaster County Tobacco Show, Farm and Home Center, judging 1 p.m.

Wednesday, January 7

Crop Planning Workshop, Hugo's Restaurant, Brownsville, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Berks County Dairy Day, Berks County Ag Center, Leesport.

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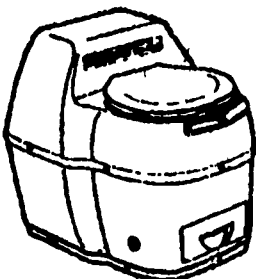


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