

Selecting An Alfalfa Variety

DR. MARVIN H. HALL
Extension Forage Specialist
Penn State

It is that time of year when alfalfa seed is generally purchased for seeding in the spring. However, the choice of which variety "is best" for a particular farm is not that easy!

During the past 10 years, more than 150 alfalfa varieties or experimental lines have been evaluated at Penn State University in research trials at three locations in Pennsylvania.

A large number of varieties for which adequate data are available have performed satisfactorily in these research trials. The results of these variety evaluation trials appear in the "Forage Trials Report." The 1997 edition of this annual publication is available free of charge at county offices of Penn State Cooperative Extension.

With all of these varieties available, how can the "best" variety be selected?

First of all, there is no "best" variety for all situations. In fact, there probably is not one "best" variety for a single Pennsylvania farm because of the extreme variability in soils across the state. The key to selecting varieties is to identify the two or three varieties that are best suited for a particular situation. The following steps may help identify those suitable varieties.

1. Select varieties that have adequate resistance to the diseases prevalent in your area, on your farm, or in the exact field where the alfalfa will be planted.

2. From these varieties, select those

that have persisted well in environments or situations similar to the farm where they will be planted. This information is given in the Penn State "Forage Trials Report."

3. From the list of varieties that you have identified as acceptable, select the highest yielding varieties. This can be done by selecting the highest yielding variety at one location over several years or by selecting the varieties that were among the highest yielding at all locations for several years. The first method will provide a small list of varieties that yield well under a narrowing range of conditions, while the second method provides a limited list of varieties that yield well under a wider range of conditions.

4. From the list, select 2 or 3 varie-

ties to plant and "test" in the field.

The varieties selected in this manner, when properly fertilized and managed, will be the highest yielding available and normally persist for three or more years. By planting a couple varieties, you are testing the "best" varieties to see which is truly best on your farm or in a particular field. This information should help when selecting an alfalfa variety in the future. Avoid use of nonadapted common seedlots when growing alfalfa as a perennial forage crop in Pennsylvania.

A limited number of alfalfa varieties have the potential of producing secondary roots and have a spreading

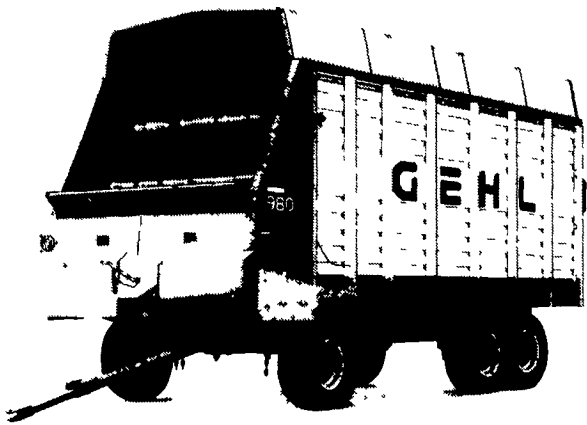
growth habit. These varieties are referred to as "creeping" alfalfas. However, in a humid climate such as Pennsylvania, these varieties have shown growth habits similar to our more typical bunch-type alfalfas and have shown no yield advantage.

Multileaf varieties, varieties developed to have more than three leaflets per leaf — have been marketed in Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, these varieties have not consistently shown improved quality or yield over traditional varieties.

Once again, select varieties based on disease resistance, winter hardiness, and yield, not because they are multileafs.



YOUR BEST FORAGE BOX VALUE



Gehl's new BU980 Self-unloading forage box has been redesigned for improved performance and durability. Features include:

- True variable-speed drive for infinite unloading speeds.
- Single lever control.
- Improved beater design.
- Stronger drive chain and reinforced roof.
- Standard highway light package.
- Optional folding 18-inch conveyor extension.

MODEL BU980 FORAGE BOXES IN STOCK NOW!

GEHL.

LEHIGH AG EQUIPMENT, INC.

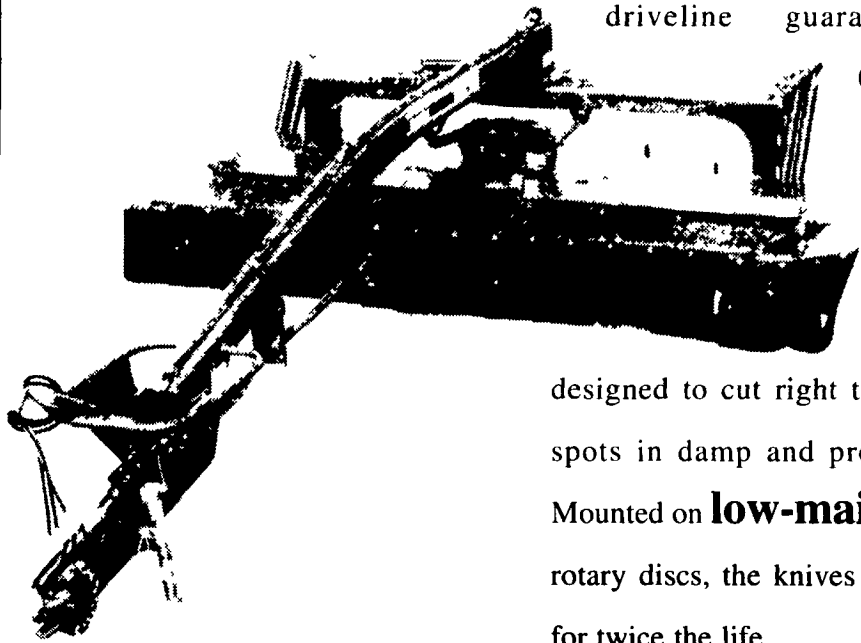
Ruppsville Road (Off Old 22 near Kuhnsville and Fogelsville)

HOURS: Mon - Fri 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM; Sat. 7:30 AM to 3:00 PM

(610) 398-2553



FOR WHEN THE GOOD EARTH ISN'T SO GOOD.



This Rotary Disc Mower Conditioner will get you out of any tight spot in a hurry.

The 1340's innovative 12 foot center-pivot is designed for **fast cutting**. And its long, 110 inch conditioner makes for even **faster drying**. You'll get unmatched **maneuverability** with the 1340, and it's easy to set for swathing or fluffy windrows.

A 12 foot cutting width and a **revolutionary** mechanical driveline guarantee **top efficiency**.

All 16, high-speed, swingaway knives are

designed to cut right through rough spots in damp and problem fields. Mounted on **low-maintenance** rotary discs, the knives are reversible for twice the life.

See your AGCO Hesston dealer today. Ask about **flexible financing** through Agrico Acceptance Company.



HESSTON

THE PRIME LINE

HERNLEY'S FARM EQUIPMENT, INC.
2095 S. Market St. Elizabethtown, Pa.
717-367-8867

STOLTZFUS FARM SERVICE, INC.
Rts. 10 & 41 Cochransville, Pa.
215-593-2407

ZIMMERMAN'S FARM SERVICE
School Road, Rt 1 Bethel, Pa.
717-933-4114

D. W. OGG

Frederick, MD 301-473-4250
Westminster, MD 410-848-4585

C.J. WONSIDLER BROS.
Finland Rd., Quakertown, PA
215-536-1935 / 215-536-7523
Rts. 309 & 100, New Tripoli, PA
610-767-7611

STANLEY'S FARM SERVICE
RD 1, Box 46 Klingerstown, Pa.
717-648-2088

UMBERGER'S OF FONTANA, INC.
RD 4, Box 545 Lebanon, Pa.
717-867-2613



HESSTON

THE PRIME LINE