

**All Gardens
Great & Small**
by
York Co.
Horticultural Agent
Tom Becker



**Mushroom, Slime Molds
And Artillery Fungus
On Mulch Beds**

With wet and significant rainfall the past several weeks 'mushrooms' and slime molds and other fungus are appearing in mulch beds and lawns. Mulched areas are consisting mainly of tree bark and wood chips.

Under wet, humid condition

the fungi that naturally inhabit soils tend to produce mushrooms. This occurs with the addition of moisture. Usually various sizes and colors of mushrooms appear in mulched landscape beds or poorly maintained turf.

All are harmless to surrounding plants. Their toxicity to humans prevents their use as a food source for anyone or any-

thing.

Wet conditions also bring out growth of slime molds. These brightly colored (yellow, blue, violet, red, or grey) slimy growths appear on the surface of mulched beds. Slime molds are not harmful to other plants in the garden, but if the growth is extensive enough, they may grow over and smother small recently planted annual plants.

Control mushrooms and slime molds mechanical by picking, raking or washing with a strong stream of water. No spray materials are recommended to prevent these under the wet conditions this spring.

To limit the occurrence of mushrooms and slime molds, eliminate some of the conditions required for the fungi to grow. Keep the surface of the mulch stirred with a rake, or keep as dry as possible, and increase air circulation in the area to promote drying of the mulched

areas. This may mean fewer plants in any given area.

The artillery fungus may also occur later this spring. Damp conditions cause this soil fungus to shoot its sticky spore mass a considerable distance towards light-colored surfaces. Vinyl or aluminum homes are likely targets. The spore mass is difficult to impossible to remove without significant damage to the house's siding. Cars in parking lots with mulched beds also may be damaged.

Mulches that have a large percentage of wood fiber rather than bark often show more of the fungus. The fiber serves as a growth medium for the fungus. The artillery fungus cannot be controlled by using a pesticide. In problem areas, replace mulched beds with an inorganic mulch especially next to light-

colored structures. Use only pure mulches such as pine, Douglas fir or cedar that contain little if any wood fiber. Or, replace the upper inch of old, existing mulch with a new layer of fresh mulch each season. Only keep a 2-to-4-inch layer of mulch available for the fungus.

These wet weather fungi growths are generally more of a nuisance than any serious threat to your garden and landscape. As soon as weather becomes dry and warmer these problems generally disappear.

For more fungi that attacks your mulch, call your Extension Office for the handout "What is Growing in My Landscape Mulch?"

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

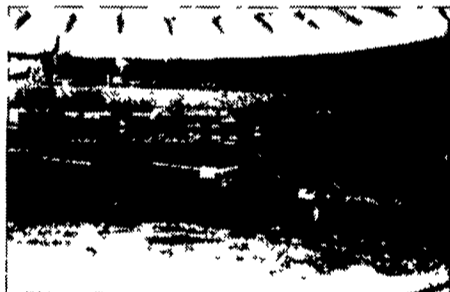
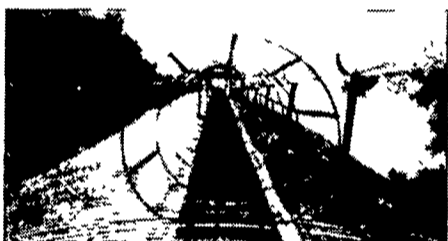
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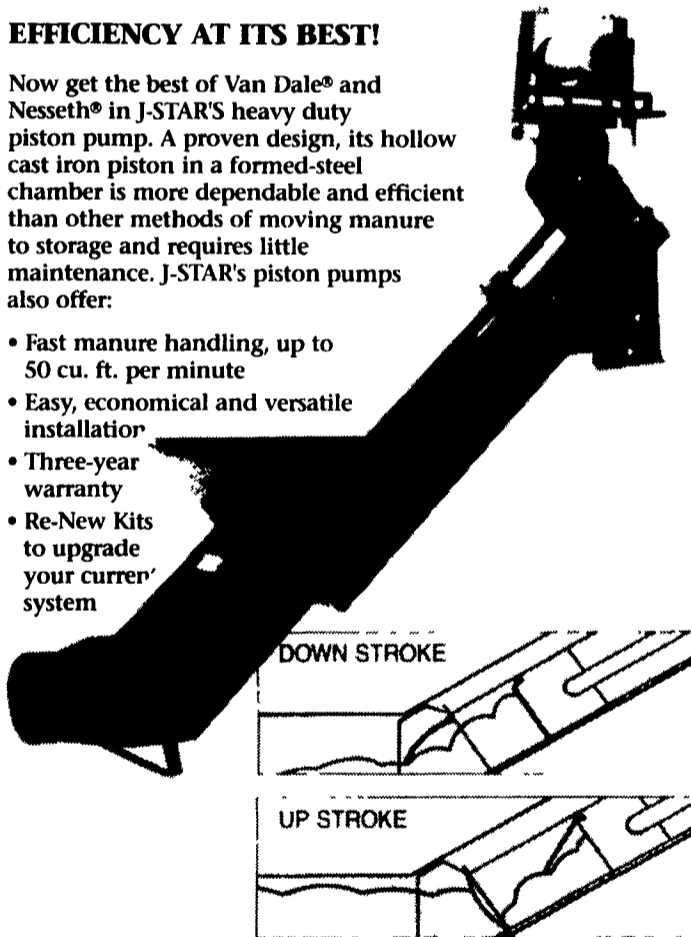
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Folic Acid

(NAPS)—Folic acid is a B vitamin that everyone needs to help cells grow and divide. It's especially important for women who may become pregnant.

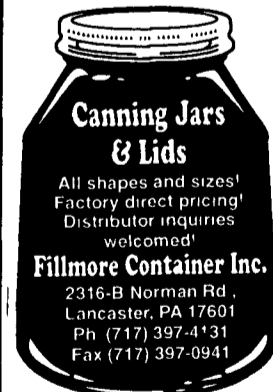
Taken before and during early pregnancy, folic acid, also known as folate, dramatically reduces the chances of having a baby born with birth defects of the spine and brain. These defects (also known as neural tube defects) can cause severe disabilities and in some cases death.

For women of childbearing years, the U.S. Pharmacopeia, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration and the March of Dimes all recommend 400 mcg of folic acid daily.

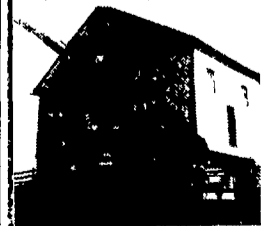
According to the March of Dimes, seven out of ten women do not begin taking folic acid until they learn they are pregnant, which is usually eight to ten weeks into the pregnancy.

By this time it is too late to reduce the risk of birth defects of the brain or spine.

It is possible to get folic acid by consuming foods such as green leafy vegetables, cereal and cereal products, and citrus fruits and juices. Certain fully fortified breakfast cereals have 100 percent of the recommended daily amount of folic acid. Many women, however, prefer to take their folic acid in tablet form or a multivitamin supplement.



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