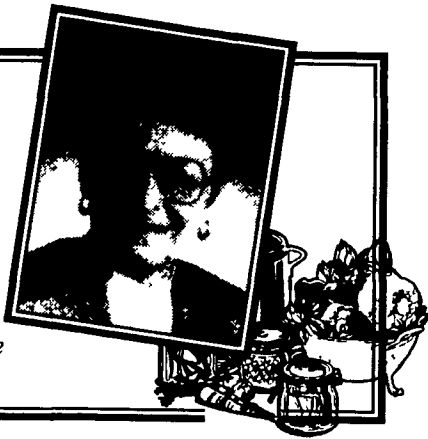


## Consuming Thoughts

by  
Fay Strickler

Penn State Extension Home  
Economist For Berks Co.



August is a peak period for harvesting watermelons and cantaloupes. Many people are apprehensive about selecting melons while others rely on techniques that are incorrect or may even damage the fruit.

Two techniques that damage melons are pressing on the end of a cantaloupe to see if it is soft, wrongly assuming it is ripe, and shaking under the assumption that if the seeds rattle, the melon must be ripe.

Likewise, very few people can slap or thump a watermelon and rightly tell if it is ripe. Let your eyes be the guide for you. First, look at the scar on the stem end where the melon was attached to the vine. The scar should be calloused and slightly sunken. Avoid those with the stem still attached or the stem scar not fully depressed. The scar should be dry, not wet or weeping. A fully mature melon

will easily detach from the vine—a "full slip." When a piece of the stem remains attached to the melon, it's called a "half slip."

The essential factors of watermelon quality are maturity and size. The larger melons have more edible flesh, proportionately, than the smaller ones.

Color is the best key to ripeness in watermelons. A yellowish underside, regardless of the rich green color of the rest of the melon, is a good sign of ripeness. A watermelon is somewhat like a book, in that you can't always tell its contents by its cover. When you go to buy a whole melon, look for one that is symmetrically shaped and has a velvety bloom—a dull, rather than shiny surface. The underside should be turning from white or pale green to a light yellowish color.

Avoid "white heart" in water-

melons—a hard, white streak running lengthwise through the melon. Seeds, too, give a clue to ripeness. If the melon is fully matured, the seeds are usually dark brown to black. (Only one variety, the Improved Garrisonian, has white seeds.)

Most retailers charge slightly more for cut watermelons. It is well worth it! In this way, you can see the maturity of the melon—the only sure way of selecting a good watermelon.

The watermelon's chief contribution is one of enjoyment—not a heavy quota of nutrients; however, watermelons do contribute a useful amount of Vitamin A and small amounts of other nutrients.

A good cantaloupe will have a well-defined netting, the raised corky lines covering the melon. If the netting covers the cantaloupe thickly and stands out like whipcord, the melon is generally good. The color should be creamy white to yellow. Too deep a yellow, however may indicate over-ripeness and such melons should be avoided.

Fully ripe cantaloupe also have a delicate aroma, although too often the aroma is hard to detect because the melons have been kept under refrigeration, or should have been.

There are no such things as a "vine ripe" melon unless they are locally grown. Cantaloupes are picked at a mature stage and kept under refrigeration to slow down ripening. So don't be in a

hurry to serve cantaloupe even though it is well matured. Cantaloupes do not increase their sugar content after picking but they do become softer, more

mellow and more satisfactory to eat if held at room temperature for a day or two after you buy them.



### FFA Member Wins State Agricultural Mechanical Technical Systems - Placement Award

Keith Sauder of East Earl and a member of the Grassland FFA Chapter was named the State FFA Agricultural Mechanical Technical Systems - Entrepreneurship winner and received a \$100 check at the state FFA conven-



tion. State winners will advance to competition for national finalist.

National finalists will each receive a plaque and a \$250 check and are eligible to participate in an educational international travel seminar in June of 1999. The national winner will be selected from this group and will receive an additional plaque and a \$250 check.

The Agricultural Mechanical Technical Systems Placement Proficiency award program recognizes outstanding FFA members for developing mechanical knowledge and skills used in the design, construction, repair, and maintenance of electrical motors, agricultural equipment and structures. It is one of 42 national award areas that recognizes FFA members for achievement in activities leading to careers in agriculture.

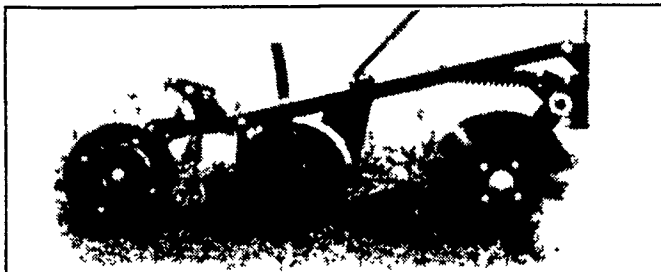
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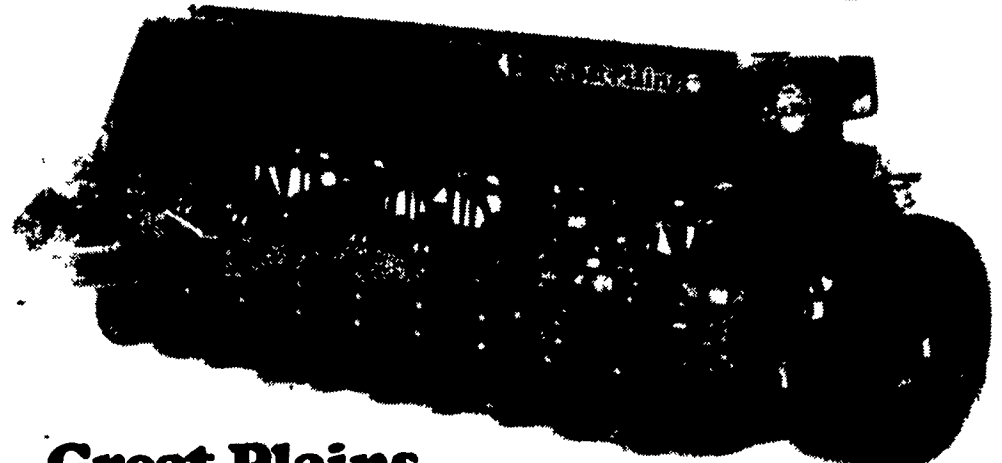
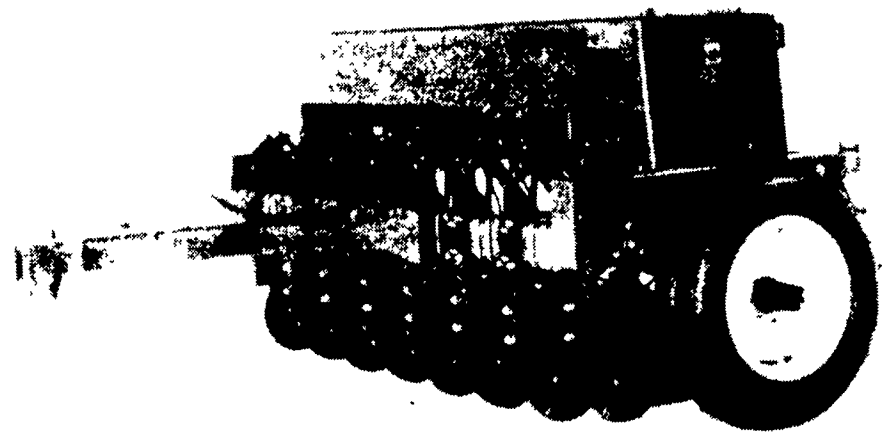
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