

# Farmstand

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necessarily service. We have much to learn about real service from the Europeans and others.

In France, for example, service is a skilled, respected career. In fact, what is so renowned about expensive French restaurants, besides the food, is the service. There is none of the proverbial French snootiness. The entire staff greets you by name at the door. You feel like a welcome guest, not a customer.

This attention works as well in New York as in Paris. Following a \$10 lunch near Roscoe, the French proprietress thanked my wife and me personally and shook our hands.

Did I remember that effort and will I go back?

What does this have to do with marketing agricultural products?

The universal point is that we all like to be fussed over, to be made to feel important. This is true whether we are buying a fancy dinner, a truckload of tomatoes, or a single cucumber. Here I am not referring to the proverbial joking of the salesman, but to working at being considerate of your customers.

Try to remember something personal about them: preferences, family events, sports teams followed. If this does not come readily, then write something down when a transaction is completed and study your notes in idle minutes. Instilling a real service mentality in employees is difficult, but remember that example is the best teacher.

Perhaps what really characterizes service is sincerity. If I serve you because service and your satisfaction are important to me, that is sincere.

# HortiCountry

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ready discovered this benefit of black mulch and use it to produce many vegetables for the early market.

Researchers in New Hampshire found no difference in early tomato yield between plants grown on red and black mulch. However, when they laid white mulch between the row middles for both mulch colors, they observed higher yields with black mulch. This was only for one year and the study was going to be repeated but it points to a possible method of increasing yields using re-

If I put up a purchased sign saying, "Our Customers Are Number One," and everyone around me has the same sign, that isn't sincere. And, all in all, sincerity is tough to fake.

Service, real service, is good business. It just needs to be done and to be felt, not only talked about.

flected light. Hopefully, further studies will see if this effect is repeatable as well as if it can be increased further using different colors and, if so, if it is economically feasible.

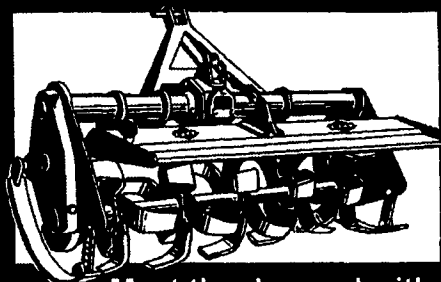
There can also be a reduction in diseases and insects from selecting different colored mulches. I mentioned earlier that tomatoes grown on red mulch had a lower incidence of early blight. Researchers in Florida reported increased yields of tomato grown on silver mulch because of a reduction in tomato spotted wilt virus. Other researchers have observed less virus infections on squash grown on silver mulch. This is believed to be a result of the mulch confusing the insects that spread the virus because of its reflective properties. Instead of landing and feeding, the reflected light causes them to continue flying past the crop.

Yellow is known to attract

some insect pests and has actually been used in IPM programs in squash. The outer rows in a field are planted on yellow mulch and then only these rows are sprayed since insects entering the field are drawn there. Researchers have reported significant saving from reduced spray applications using this method to "trap" insect pests. The researchers in Belgium also used colored mulches treated with glue to capture thrips in their study on leek production. They found a lower number of thrips on leeks grown on treated mulches of colors attractive to insects (yellow and blue) than on leeks grown on bare soil.

On a related note, researchers in Israel reported that by using various-colored plastic shade nets they were able to obtain dramatic effects on growth and flowering of several types of cut flowers. This technology might eventually find a use in the production of vegetable transplants.

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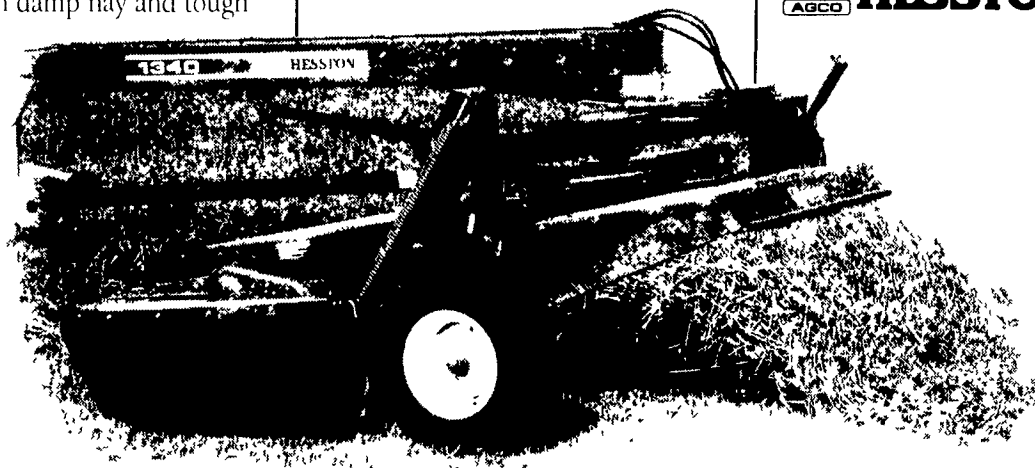
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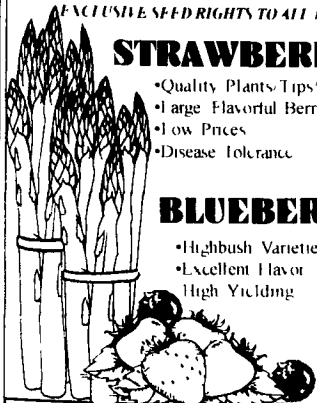
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