

They're Not Weeds, But 'Conservation Seeds'

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"It's a good system," Ernst said of using living mulches such as vetch on fields, "but it's hard on people to do it."

His conservation techniques with the vetch put him in contact with a variety of people regarding conservation practices, which in turn increased his awareness of natives and their place in the environment.

By 1964, Ernst had added 40 acres of leased land to his operation. Today, about 40 years later, Ernst plants about 2,000 acres, which are divided among five townships and spread throughout a 15-mile radius. All of the plots are in Crawford County.

"I originally tried to stay real concentrated in one location," Ernst said of his planting locations, "but then at some point you buy yourself out of land!"

The operation includes 30,000 square feet of warehouse space and 4,000 square feet of greenhouse.

His more commonly purchased products include seed for switchgrass, since it tolerates low fertility, and crownvetch for areas with steep banks. Ernst said he also sells a fair amount of Tioga deertongue, which tolerates a low pH and aluminum concentrations, and is desirable for strip-mine reclamation.

For farmers, Ernst said, items such as switchgrass and Niagra bit bluestem are a desirable forage for livestock, although they are a hard sell because they take several years to establish. Once established, however, Ernst said the grasses produce more volume.

Ernst said that as part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP),

it is possible for farmers to receive subsidies for planting switchgrass.

For the 2.5 million pounds of seed he produces each year, Ernst said he charges anywhere from 10 cents to \$400 per pound, with prices based on production costs.

Ernst markets about 200 products, which comprise mostly seeds but include cuttings from plants such as dogwood and willow. He propagates the cuttings in a warehouse he has adapted by installing an overhead greenhouse irrigation system.

His sales in the past 20 years have increased by about 10 percent per year, he said. As the only business of its kind in the region, Ernst reaches his potential customers by attending conservation shows, speaking to trade associations, and advertising in publications.

Much of his success, said Ernst, has come from the participation of his family members. His wife, Marcia, handles accounting and administrative work for the company. His sons, Andy and Mike, are both trained in agronomy. His daughter Robin has a mobile restoration company that is often hired by customers to help implement the reclamation.

Although Ernst's orders have tripled in the last two years and average about 90 per day, he maintains that his success comes from doing what interests him. "It's not only because it's economically rewarding," he said. "It's also a vocation in a sense, because I love it. The whole family loves it."

For more information about Ernst Conservation Seeds, visit its Website at www.ernstseed.com.



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National Dairy Shrine Announces Scholarship, Awards For 2001

COLUMBUS, Ohio — National Dairy Shrine (NDS) has budgeted over \$30,000 for scholarships and awards for 2001. Deadline for completed applications is March 15.

Interested individuals can get additional information from NDS's Website, www.dairyshrine.org. Applications may be downloaded with Acrobat Reader or contact Maurice E. Core, Executive Director, 1224 Alton Darby Creek Road, Columbus, Ohio 43228; phone: 614-878-5333; fax: 614-870-2622, or e-mail: ndairyshrine@hotmail.com.

Scholarship and awards include:

"Guest of Honor," NDS's highest award, recognizes a contemporary dairy leader for achievements contributing significantly to the dairy industry.

"Distinguished Dairy Cattle Breeder" is presented to active, operating dairy producers who own and breed dairy cattle. Family groups, such as husband-wife, father-son, and brother-sister, are eligible as partnership teams.

"Pioneer" awards are presented to living or deceased persons who contributed significantly to the dairy industry during their lifetimes. Three or four persons are recognized annually.

"Progressive Dairy Produc-

ers," three cash awards (\$2,000 each), are presented for educational travel to outstanding young dairymen (21 to 45 years of age). Three herd size categories: less than 100 cows; 101 to 500 cows; and 501 cows or more.

"Kildee Scholarship." The top 25 contestants in the past three National Intercollegiate Dairy Cattle Judging contests are eligible to apply for up to two \$3,000 scholarships for advanced study related to the dairy industry. The top 25 contestants in the National 4-H and FFA Dairy Judging Contests are eligible to compete for a \$2,000 college scholarship (undergraduate work).

"Dairy Student Recognition Program" is to recognize and reward graduating seniors planning a career related to dairy production. Winner receives a \$1,500 cash award, \$1,000 for second and three to seven \$500 cash awards (depending on the number and quality of applicants).

"National Dairy Shrine/Dairy Management Inc. (DMI) Milk Marketing Scholarships" encourage students to pursue careers in the marketing of dairy products. Four thousand dollars awarded annually, \$3,000 provided by DMI and \$1,000 provided by NDS.

"McCullough Scholarships" are two scholarships (\$2,500 and \$1,000) awarded annually to high school seniors planning to enter a 4-year college or university with intent to major in: Dairy/Animal Science with a communications emphasis or Agricultural Journalism with a Dairy/Animal Science emphasis.

If you know someone who should be nominated for these awards, please request applications now or visit our Website and download the applications. Winners will be announced in June, with the awards to be presented at the annual NDS awards banquet in Madison, Wisconsin on Thursday, Oct. 4, 2001.

Professional Dairy Managers Take The Lead

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) - The Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania (PDMP) will be meeting in State College on March 15, 2001. This group of progressive, forward thinking producers and agri-business persons provides opportunities for the members to network, test their latest ideas, and share cutting edge concepts. With education as the focus, PDMP serve to promote a favorable business climate in Pennsylvania for dairy producers. PDMP members work collectively, support each other, and unite for the benefit of the whole dairy industry. Dairy producers are invited to

attend the March 15th meeting in State College. Attending the meeting will give producers the opportunity to interact with current members, see the benefits the organization can have on their own operation, tour fellow members businesses, and listen to the featured speakers.

PDMP have two extraordinary speakers lined up for the meeting. Jeff Keown from the University of Nebraska will be providing an overview of the successful efforts to expand the Nebraska Dairy Industry and grow the agriculture infrastructure throughout the state of Nebraska. Jeff has implemented a partnering program with the Governors

office and the Power Company to provide for a favorable climate for dairy. In addition, Doug Wilson, C.O.O. of Genex, will be sharing his international and national perspectives on the dairy industry. His global perspective on dairying will provide progressive producers with ideas and insight in the future.

"The Professional Dairy Managers are a unique group", says Dan Mains, President of PDMP. "PDMP offers interaction, networking, and problem solving among the members. No other organization does that for progressive dairy producers in Pennsylvania. The

organization is driven by Producer Members and therefore meets the needs of dairy producers."

The Professional Dairy Managers invite dairy producers and agri-business persons who are interested in exploring new ideas and learning new information to become a member. Memberships are offered to dairy producers and youngstock growers. Associate Memberships are offered to individual agri-business persons who have an interest in dairy.

Throughout the year, the organization holds membership meetings with an educational focus. Previous membership meeting have focused on topics

such as Benchmarking, Hispanic Labor, Break Through Management, Cost of Production, Milk Marketing, Expansion, Nutrient Management, and Innovative Technology. In addition the membership plans an out-of-state tour in the fall.

For more information about PDMP or the meeting on March 15, contact Tammy Perkins at (888) 373-7232 or email at tap10@psu.edu.

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