

Nematode 'Cleansing' Technique May Benefit Potato Crops

PROSSER, Wash. — Rotating potatoes with alfalfa or spearmint may offer farmers a sustainable way to reclaim crop soils contaminated with corky ringspot disease, Agricultural Research Service studies suggest.

Corky ringspot—a brown, bull's-eye blemish on tubers—is caused by the tobacco rattle virus, which is passed into potato plants by wormlike soil organisms called stubby root nematodes.

In affected areas such as Washington's Columbia Basin, where 5,000 acres are contaminated, potato farmers have either stopped growing the crop altogether or resorted to fumigating soil to kill nematodes that spread the virus.

At \$250 per acre, however, fumigation is expensive. Plus, it kills soil organisms other than

nematodes. A more sustainable, pest-specific approach could come from rotating potatoes with alfalfa or spearmint to rid the nematodes of their viral payload, according to scientists Rick Boydston, Pete Thomas and Hassan Mojtahedi.

Boydston and Thomas are at ARS' Vegetable and Forage Crop Production Research Unit in Prosser, Wash. Mojtahedi works for Washington State University.

Their strategy is based on two observations: First, the virus can't survive in alfalfa or spearmint, so the nematodes can't acquire it while feeding on the plants' roots. Second, the nematodes naturally shed the virus from their bodies by molting. Given enough time, the scientists reasoned, nematodes that fed only on these plants eventually would rid themselves of the virus,

and thus pose little or no danger of infecting a subsequent potato crop.

Indeed, in greenhouse trials, virus-bearing nematodes that fed on potted alfalfa or spearmint plants for three months lost their ability to infect disease-free potato plants. Conversely, nematodes that fed on tobacco, a natural host of the virus, retained their ability to infect disease-free potato plants.

Some farmers already practice this rotation but still fumigate fields with a previous history of corky ringspot. The key, scientists emphasize, is to eliminate weeds in alfalfa or spearmint crops where nematodes can acquire the virus. These include hairy and black nightshade, downy brome, common chickweed and prickly lettuce. They are among 38 weed species the scientists have tested.

Study of Organic Growers Co-op At Berks Center

LEESPORT (Berks Co.) — The case study of Tuscarora Organic Growers Cooperative will be presented March 18, from 7:30 p.m.-9 p.m., here at the Berks County Ag Center.

Chris Fullerton, manager, will be part of a study circle to discuss the wholesale organic market of the cooperative. Cost is \$5, payable at the door. No registration is required.

For more information about this meeting and other meetings addressing organic agriculture in southeast Pennsylvania, contact Mena Hautau, extension agent, Penn State Cooperative Extension-Berks County, P.O. Box 520, Leesport, PA 19533, (610) 378-1327, fax (610) 378-7961, or e-mail berksext@psu.edu.

Annual Tree Sale Set

SUNBURY (Northumberland Co.) — The Northumberland County Conservation District's 32nd annual tree sale is under way. Orders will be accepted until March 22.

Pickup this year will again be at the Rockefeller Township building on Seven Points Road. Trees will be available April 25-26.

Brochures for the sale are available by calling the District office at (570) 286-7114 ext. 4. Brochures are also available if you stop by the conservation district office on Plum Creek Road, RD3 Sunbury.

Need farm equipment? Check out the classifieds in Section C!

Corbett Selected To Head Land O'Lakes Fluid Milk Supply

ARDEN HILLS, Minn. — Land O'Lakes, Inc. announced the hiring of Gary Corbett to head the national food and agricultural cooperative's fluid milk supply division. Corbett previously served as vice president for dairy and governance with Dean Foods, Inc.

"Gary Corbett brings extensive dairy industry and fluid-milk marketing experience and expertise to our milk-supply operations," said Land O'Lake President and Chief Executive Officer Jack Gherty. "Bringing Gary on board is a reflection of Land O'Lakes commitment to establishing a strong presence, and

taking a leadership role, in the consolidating fluid-milk industry."

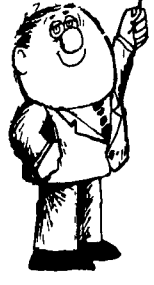
In his new role as leader of the Land O'Lakes Fluid Milk Supply Division, Corbett will report to Land O'Lakes Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for Dairy Foods Chris Po-

lincinski. Corbett will take over from Land O'Lakes Vice President for Public Affairs Don Berg, who had led the fluid milk supply division since it was organized in October 2001. Berg will now concentrate on public, member, and governmental affairs activities.

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Left to Right: Neil (son) holding Kyle, Ruthie holding Kavita, & Glenn Bushong

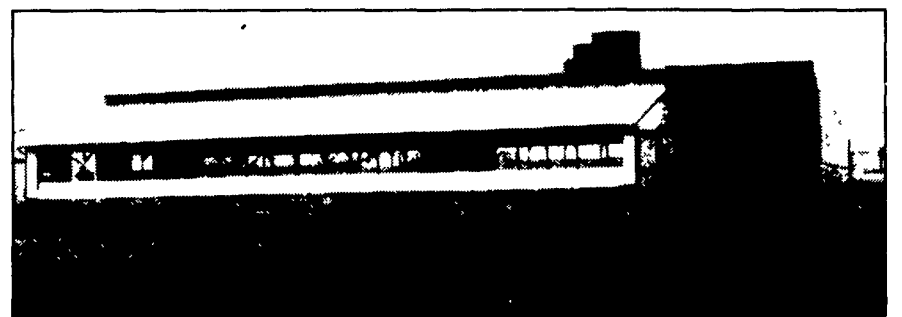
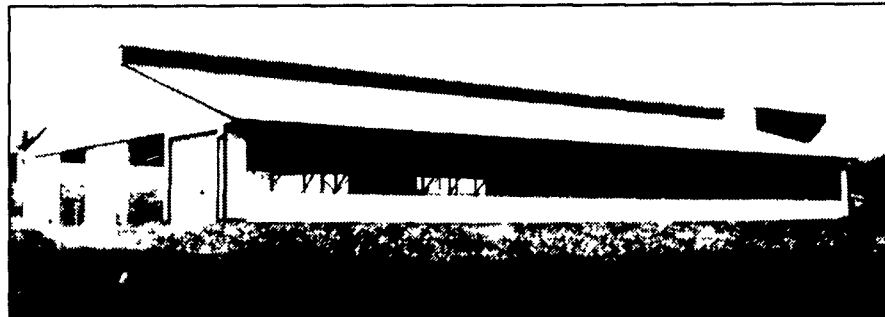
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