

Gardeners Advised To Heed Seed Package Information

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — The gardening season is just around the corner. The forsythia is beginning to bud and spring bulb stems and foliage are beginning to emerge from the ground. It's time to start deciding what to plant in the garden this year.

Planting seeds offers gardeners a low-cost opportunity to stick with favorite plants and try out new ones. When considering seeds, advises a horticulture expert in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, you should ponder information found on the package.

Early-spring planning with seed packages, according to Elsa Sanchez, assistant professor of horticultural systems management, makes a garden better in summer.

• **Picture:** A picture of the plant in flower or harvested fruit or vegetable typically is found on the front of the seed

package. The picture offers useful information like flower type and color and what to expect when harvesting a fruit or vegetable. Remember that the picture is usually of the flower, fruit or vegetable at its best, so use it only as a guide.

• **Plant Description:** Often it is difficult to determine the form of a plant based on the picture. Seed packages usually provide a written description of the plant including the plant cultivar, plant height, days to harvest or bloom, and habits, such as "climbing, upright," etc.

• **Uses and Weight:** Seed packages often suggest uses for the plant. Some examples are for containers, beds, winter houseplants, trellises, etc. The number of seeds or weight of the seed also is found on the package.

• **Date:** The package will have the year for which the seeds were packaged. For example, "Packed For Season 2002." This information is important because as seeds age they lose viability. If seeds have a germination rate of 80 percent in 2002, the rate can be expected to be lower in 2003; for example, 50 percent.

• **Planting Directions:** The seed package should have directions on when to plant the seeds, depending on where it will be planted in the United States. The directions should include planting depth, plant spacing and plant exposure requirements (full or partial sun or shade). This section also will advise whether the seeds should be planted indoors prior to planting outdoors. The planting directions often also will contain basic directions for the care of the plant.

Seed packages for some plants contain additional information.

• **Perennials:** The hardiness zone for the plant will be found on the back of the package. The cold hardiness zone is based on the lowest temperature the plant will grow in. Since cold hardiness zones in Pennsylvania range from three to seven, it is important to know what zone the plant will be grown in.

This information sometimes is included on the seed package; it also can be found in gardening books. Seed packages for perennial seed also will include when the plant will bloom.

• **Seed Mixes:** Typical packaged seed mixes include: wildflowers, gourds and salad mixes. Additional information offered on these seed packages is the percentage of each seed type, the area the seeds will cover, the life cycle of the plants (such as annual, biennial or perennial), and the percentage of inert matter or vermiculite. Inert matter and vermiculite are included to help broadcast the seed uniformly.

"It is a good idea to keep the seed package after planting the seeds as a reference for future care, harvesting and planting," says Sanchez. "The diversity of seeds is exciting because it offers gardeners virtually limitless planting combinations of flowers, fruits and vegetables to grow and enjoy."

Wanted: Well-Kept Farms For Dairy of Distinction Merit

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Pennsylvania dairy farms are invited to apply for this year's Dairy of Distinction Award from the Northeast Dairy Farm Beautification Program. Applications must be submitted by April 15.

The award is based on the idea that attractive farmsteads enhance consumer confidence in the wholesomeness of milk and stimulate milk sales and public support for the industry. Dairies receiving the highest scores in each of 10 Pennsylvania districts will be awarded an 18- by 24-inch Dairy of Distinction sign to display in front of their farm.

"This program is run by volunteers and recognizes the hard work and dedication of dairy producers who promote a positive image for the dairy industry," said Mike O'Connor, secretary of the Pennsylvania Dairy of Distinction program and professor of dairy science extension in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

Roadside judging will take place in May. Judges will look at factors that can be controlled by the farmer, such as clean and attractively finished buildings; neat landscaping, ditches, roads, and lanes; and well-maintained fences. They also will take into



Crystal Spring Farm, Mifflintown

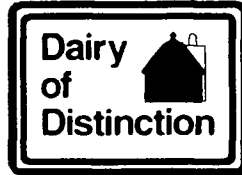
account other aspects of the farm, such as cleanliness of animals, the barnyard, feed areas, and manure management.

Winning farms will be notified in late June. Because this is a yearly award, previous winners are reevaluated each year to see if they are still maintaining excellent standards.

To receive an application, call Mike O'Connor at (814) 863-3913 or e-mail

him at MOConnor@das.psu.edu

Since 1987, Pennsylvania's Dairy of Distinction Program has recognized more than 750 dairy farms. The Pennsylvania program is part of the Northeast Dairy Farm Beautification Program, which also includes New York, New Jersey, and Vermont. Dairies in these states can contact the program secretary in their state for applications.



How Is Your Farm Scored?

Awards will be based upon neatness, good maintenance, and other factors, which can be controlled by the farmer. Attractive background scenery should not be weighed heavily in judging. All judging observations should be made from a vehicle at one or more points on an adjacent public highway (or if farm is off the road, the nearest lane). Judging should give equal consideration to old wood construction and new construction of metal or concrete block.

The award program may be used for subsequent advertising or promotion activities for dairy producers or dairy farming. Farmers who apply for awards agree that, if selected, they will cooperate with these activities and make all reasonable efforts to maintain both the exterior and interior of their properties in an acceptable condition.

How The Judging Works

Judging teams will visit farms during the month of May. Farms will be judged each year as the award is presented on an annual basis. Any dairy failing to maintain appearance standards will be asked to remove their sign. The Dairy of Distinction signs remain the property of the committee, not the property of the dairy farmer. All farms must achieve a compliance score of 90 percent of their Dairy of Distinction score card. Your cooperative or milk handler will be contacted to approve your milk quality.

Rules

- 1 The Dairy of Distinction sign remains the property of the Northeast Dairy Farm Beautification Program Committee (NEDFBP).
- 2 The post and bracket shall be supplied by and maintained by the dairy farmer. NEDFBP suggests that a wood post 4"x4"x12' or iron pipe 2"x12' be used. Posts or pipe should be installed and maintained in true vertical position with 8' above ground. Top of the bracket should be lower than six inches from the top of the post. In addition, NEDFBP suggests that the sign be mounted in a frame to provide additional stability.
- 3 The sign shall be displayed in front of the dairy at roadside. An attractive post and bracket, or other frame shall be used to display the sign. No more than three signs should be displayed from the sign frame or post, and all shall be of a style, general size and quality comparable to the Dairy of Distinction sign. The sign should be secured on all sides to avoid wind damage.
- 4 Signs shall not be moved to other premises. New owners of a Dairy of Distinction farm must apply to retain the sign.
- 5 Replacement of damaged signs shall be at the discretion of the committee.
- 6 No producer shall be charged with scoring or sign expenses.
- 7 The judges' decision will be final.
- 8 Judging will take place between May 1 and May 31.
- 9 Farms awarded a Dairy of Distinction sign in previous years will be judged between April 1 and April 30. If they do not qualify, they will be rejudged between May 1 and May 31 so they have the opportunity to keep the sign.
- 10 Farms that do not requalify will return the sign to their regional Dairy of Distinction Committee.

Dairy of Distinction 2002 Pennsylvania Application

PURPOSE OF PROGRAM

- Attractive dairy farms give the consumer greater confidence in the wholesomeness of milk and stimulate milk sales which encourages public support for the dairy industry. The award gives recognition to the dairy farmer for maintaining a well-kept farmstead.

ELIGIBILITY

- All Northeast dairy farms producing milk for sale are invited to submit an application for the award. Dairies receiving the 10 highest scores in each of the 21 districts will receive an 18"x24" Dairy of Distinction sign to be displayed in front of their farm.

APPLICATION

- Your Name _____ Farm Name _____
- Mailing Address _____
- Phone Number _____
- Cooperative or Handler (where you ship your milk, be specific) _____
- _____
- (Your Handler will be contacted to approve your milk quality)
- Location (driving directions for judging team) _____
- _____
- _____
- County (where your farm is located) _____

I hereby apply to the Northeast Dairy Farm Beautification Committee to have my dairy scored in accordance with the rules of the program for the purpose of obtaining a Dairy of Distinction sign to be displayed on my premises. (No producer will be charged for scoring or sign expense.)

Date _____

Signature Owner/Operator _____
Return application by April 15 to:
Pennsylvania: Michael O'Connor
Department of Dairy and Animal Science
324 Henning Building
Penn State University
University Park, PA 16802

- **NEW YORK** - Carol Keene-Aunsille, 3993 Jordonville Road, Jordonville, NY 13361
- **NEW JERSEY** - Joy Ricker, 91 Beemer Road, Sussex, NJ 07461
- **VERMONT** - Elisa Clancy, Vermont Department of Agriculture, 16 State St., Drawer 20, Montpelier, VT 05620-2901

FOR SALE
PEANUT HULLS
For BEDDING
Most effective as bedding for all kinds of beef and dairy cattle, hogs, horses, sheep and poultry
Any amount delivered or call for at farm.

Esbenshade Turkey Farm
(America's Oldest—Since 1858)
PO Box 337
Paradise, Pa.
(717) 687-7631