

22-Year-Old Produces Products For The Planet



John Yoder grew up in town, but credits his grandfather for enabling him to establish a farmers' market.

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designated to the senior citizens marketing program. Coupons are distributed through the Office of Aging to senior citizens to use at roadside markets such as Yoder's.

"Its (this program) is good for the growers and good for senior citizens," Hayes said.

Luba Somits, director for the Chester County Department of Aging, said that many clients have financial reverses but are too proud to ask for help. Somits said that she has been in homes where all they had to eat was a frozen raccoon. Although Chester County is considered one of the richest counties in the state, it has pockets of severe poverty.

Somits said that it is important

for seniors to have a place where they can find top quality produce such as Yoders.

Yoder also contributes to the gleaning program, established to help feed 14,000 people in Chester County. Yoder's farm is one of 20 county farms that provided 24 tons of fresh produce for the program last year.

When Yoder was 13 years old, he worked for a vegetable grower in the area. Four years ago, Yoder started growing his own produce and selling them at a little stand under a tree in front of his grandfather's farm.

"My grandfather's (Aaron Kauffman's) influence is invaluable," Yoder said. "He advised me to find the best expert in the field and ask lots of questions.

"I learned as I went and from



During the unveiling of a special program to benefit Pennsylvania produce growers and the elderly population, Highland Ridge Farm welcomed customers and dignitaries.

other growers and marketers," Yoder said.

"Innovative ideas, lots of advice and help from him," Yoder said enables him to successfully manage growing 15 acres of fully irrigated vegetables.

Yoder started with mostly sweet corn, but now grows tomatoes, cantaloupes, peppers, pumpkins, squash, cucumbers, and cut flowers that are marketed both wholesale and retail.

Yoder said that he contacted local grocery stores and provides top quality produce that he grows and some that he buys from other growers.

"Route 10 traffic really helps. Walmart brings lots of traffic past here which has been a plus for us," Yoder said.

Special events are planned throughout the year, but the largest promotion is the Fall Fest

with hay rides, pick-your-own pumpkins, and food stands attract school classes and passers-by.

Helping Yoder are five family members (parents, siblings, and grandfather) and two employees.

Yoder said that he most enjoys the production end. The most challenging is that everything needs to be done at the same time — "but that's the nature of this business," he said.

Garden Celebrates Vines And Roses

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — 2002 is The Year of the Rose and what better way for Hershey Gardens to celebrate its original heritage than with a rose festival — A Day of Vines and Roses.

This important event will be conducted on Saturday, Aug. 3, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and will include tours, demonstrations, family activities, and music.

Visitors can learn how to start

their own rose garden, how to make magnificent rose floral arrangements, and how to distinguish different types of roses and learn how to care for them. Tours of Hershey Gardens' renowned Rose Gardens will be every half hour throughout the event.

Children will be enchanted by stories from Miss Elizabeth Lady Beetle, and can make their own scented soap and rose crafted

bookmarks. A scavenger hunt will capture their interest as they learn about nature and roses.

Whitcraft said all activities are included in general Hershey Gardens admission: \$6 adults, \$5.50 seniors 62 and up, and \$3 ages 3-15. Members and children under 3 will be admitted free.

Hershey Gardens is a 23-acre botanical display garden located at 170 Hotel Road, Hershey.

Birdseed May Make Your Plants Sick

COLUMBUS, Ohio - What homeowners feed wild birds may not be very good for their plants and vegetable garden.

Ohio State University plant pathologists have found that sunflower seeds, promoted as the top choice of wild bird feed, may harbor a fungal pathogen that causes Sclerotinia stem rot in a wide range of native plants, herbaceous perennials, annual bedding plants, vegetables and woody ornamentals.

In a study, published in HortScience, the researchers analyzed 10 bags of various brands of commercial sunflower seeds purchased throughout Columbus, Ohio, and found that half of them contained resting structures of the fungus — all of which were 100 percent viable.

"Almost two percent of the contents of one bag was Sclerotinia resting structures. That may not sound like a lot, but when you use up a bag of sunflower seeds every three weeks for a year and each bag contains 1.7 percent of fungal spores, you're introducing a lot of Sclerotinia in your garden," said Steve Nameth, an Ohio State plant pathologist and one of the researchers of the study. "If you don't have problems with this disease in your garden, then it's not an issue. But

if you do have problems, then this could be a source."

Sclerotinia stem rot, also known as cottony rot because it produces a distinctive cottony structure at the base of the plant's stem, is a major disease of sunflowers. The fungal pathogen replaces the seeds of the sunflower with resting spores, which slip through processing cracks and are inadvertently bagged in commercial wild bird feed as sunflower seeds.

"Commercial birdseed production is not an elaborate process," said Nameth. "If it was, you wouldn't be able to drop a few bucks at the local department store for a bag." Lack of attention to detail in processing, however, may cost homeowners that picture perfect plant or vegetable garden.

Sclerotinia stem rot has a host range of over 50 common ornamentals, a variety of vegetables including garden beans, lettuce and cucurbits, and even field crops like soybeans, wheat and alfalfa. The disease, which causes the plant to wilt and eventually die, can be spread two ways: either direct contact with the plant stem or wind-borne spores which can then land on a host and infect it.

"That is why finding Sclerotinia

New Life For Sweltering Flower Gardens



A kidney-shaped water garden requires little care when a balance between fish and plants is maintained. Plants are planted to accent the area during the different seasons. Foget-me-nots and wild rose bushes are in bloom. In the fall, Japanese anemone will add color.

in commercial birdseed is such a concern," said Nameth. "Those spores can sit dormant for five or six years and once they come into contact with a host, they germinate like seed, attack the plant and produce a rot."

Nameth said homeowners and garden lovers can take some precautionary measures against spreading the disease, including switching to a different birdseed brand if they are experiencing problems with the brand they are using, and practicing good sanitation.

"Keep the area around birdfeeders clean. Many people pick up the hulls of sunflower seeds and use them in mulch," said Nameth. "You really don't want to do that because all you're doing is inoculating the rest of your garden with the disease."

Nameth said to also keep a sharp eye on the feeding behavior of birds that visit the birdfeeder. "The resting spores may look similar and be the same size as sunflower seeds, but the birds won't eat them."

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would give it a more colorful punch in the spring.

"I spend a lot of time looking at catalogs, and I like added different varieties of peonies," Bowlan said. She recommends "Charm," a variety with thick stems that will stand erect and not fall over like many varieties.

"Peonies resent being moved. It's important to replant at the same level and to place in a spot with full sun," Bowlan said.

Peonies do not always bloom the first year after transplanting, she said, but when established will do well.

Bowlan improves soil fertility by using mushroom soil. "Most perennials thrive on it. Peonies love it, but irises hate it," she said.

Bowlan is executive director and president for the National Farm Transition Network, which requires traveling to many states. Maintaining a half of acre of flowers is an ever expanding hobby for her. Her husband, Frederic, said he does the grunt work. He also takes an interest in gardening, but he is more inclined to like square borders and straight lines. Bowlan likes circular designs and is more creative. Consequently, the couple designate different areas for his and her gardens.