

VEGETARIAN

No. 27

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MR. COUNTY AGENT:

Seems there are a number of odds and ends left over from agents training sessions, inquiries and the like. Let's see what we can do to wrap them up.

CROSSWISE WATERMELONS....loaded, that is. Think you'll be hearing more of this method in the coming season.

Might be well to start getting briefed on it for your area. Particularly if you're planning to ship Congos, and by rail.

The crosswise load compared to conventional lengthwise methods indicates a substantial reduction in damage in favor of the former.

However, be certain to remember that there's some data to the effect that quite a percentage of melons have had hidden injury which was traced in tests to before-shipping handling. Watch for sources of damage from rough handling during harvesting and loading melons.

HANDLING....a number of situations indicate that increased quality awareness should be in the minds and action of the Florida vegetable industry in the next few years.

In the field, yes, but also in the channels of handling not usually considered to be a part of growing the crop. It's amazing to see anyone disregard good handling practices after so much has gone into production of the crop.

Your growers would do well to create and maintain an interest in the crop far beyond production. For example, 'pre-cooling' means more than a label, or more than dipping a crate of corn in an irrigation ditch, or more than having elaborate facilities and not using them properly. Or how does a tomato eat when it drops eight feet?

We're not saying all growers have this disregard for their valuable product, but that you'd be rendering a service to encourage interest beyond merely growing the crop....it will be measured in grower returns in the long run.

MERCHANDISING....as consumers see it. When a vegetable commodity marketing glut occurs, consumers seldom if ever know that the price is low.

Special sales efforts and lower retail prices take two weeks or more to put into effect. In many cases a glutted condition can come and go in two weeks.

To relieve marketing gluts consumers must be informed of a plentiful supply at lower than normal prices. Our food stores can do this with no cost to the producer but they need two weeks advance notice.

The pay-off will come as a result of our ability to prognosticate heavy supplies and low prices. It won't be easy.

NEW VARIETIES....do your best to get a look at the many new varieties mentioned as promising during the training sessions. Many of you still have time to get in demonstration plantings.

Among those varieties of which a limited seed supply was currently indicated were: Seminole bean; Smith's Perfect and Georgia 47 cantaloupe; Palomar cucumber; Gold Rush sweet potato; Kokomo, Manatee, Manalucie, and Homestead tomatoes; Charleston Gray and Fairfax watermelon; and Rhode Island Red and New Hampshire Midget watermelon.

Among other varieties you should see, but will not find a ready seed source, were: Florida 201-2 pole bean; Rio Gold cantaloupe; Stono and Ashley cucumbers.

CHEMICAL WEED CONTROL...many materials have been introduced but few can now be credited with standard usage. With few exceptions good cultivation and cultural practices are still indicated as the best ways of controlling weeds in vegetables.

Why mention it at all then?

We do have some good research of relatively long standing, but the sum and substance of most of it continues to indicate that the suggestions therefrom should be on a trial basis only. We have currently summarized this information, as presented at agents training sessions, and can offer more information where you have specific interests. Suggestions are for beans, crucifers, sweet corn, lettuce, endive, pepper, eggplant, onion, spinach, celery, carrots and parsley on mucks. On sands, crucifers, pepper, eggplant, onions, celery and cucurbits are included.

Ask if you need more details. You'll get them.

MANEB...it's in our fungicide recommendations on several crops and is listed as 'promising' under cucumber, cantaloupe, and squash.

It's timely, so what about watermelons?

'Promising' might be the best category to leave it in until research goes a little further. Actually maneb was slightly inferior to some standard fungicides in control of downy mildew and gummy stem blight in 1954 trials under moderate disease severity. The amount of leaf burning by maneb was not extremely objectionable in 1954 but might possibly be in other seasons. Yields after the maneb spray were not significantly lower than yields after the materials that gave better disease control.

CROTONATES...you'll remember our last stand on control of powdery mildew of cucurbits indicated that lacking complete experimental evidence, no general recommendations for the control of this disease could be made.

See the VEGETARIAN of April 2, 1954. It further states that in work at the Sanford Station crotonates were promising, but that the residue hazard had not been fully determined. Where do we stand today?

At about the same place. The work at Sanford was by Dr. George Swank, who has since moved to another position in the North. A current survey of plant pathologists shows little extensive work has been undertaken with the material to date.

We do not feel qualified to recommend without some research to back it up.

CAPTAN...was not in our fungicide recommendations in VEGETARIAN 4/2/54.

Where do we stand now? Right where we were. When research indicates it should be included in any specific recommendation, we'll be glad to so inform you. To date no research indicates you should include captan in your current suggestions on vegetables.

WHERE'S 4-7-5?...still with us to a certain extent. But you'll agree a gradual shift to some higher analysis grades are indicated. It's outlined in VEGETARIAN 4/20/54. Extension, Industry and Research have agreed to help it along.

We continue to feel that this change won't come about overnight but that a 6-8-6 can be substituted as an alternate for the old standard. Earlier opinions that this might improve recommendations, formulations and usage, still appear to be sound.

Are your growers giving it a chance? Or a try, at least?

MINORS....yes, there are isolated instances where including minor elements in fertilizers is recommended; but wholesale use of minors, particularly where it costs the grower money, is not indicated.

Except in special instances, such as copper application on mucks or manganese application where the pH is unfavorable, your growers would be well advised to use minors only where a need has been demonstrated. Remember that many of the fungicides used today have available elements, and that instances of toxicity from many of these elements may be as common as deficiencies.

FERTILIZER PLACEMENT....get a clear conception of this method of fertilizer application to your growers. It has several advantages which could be well incorporated into vegetable production practices over the state. Keep an eye on equipment sheds and don't be surprised if you find rigs for proper placement off the tractor.

We say more growers should give placement a try. Best results are usually obtained by applying fertilizer at planting in two bands, each located 2 to 3 inches to the side and 2 to 3 inches below the planting row.

Believe you'll note some fertilizer-type responses, possibilities of combining some operations, and feel too that placement may contribute considerably to reducing several 'disease' problems often encountered early in the crop while plants are small.

ORGANICS....how much organic nitrogen should be included in vegetable fertilizers? Insurance-wise, we've settled out at about 20%-25%.

There's no sure-fire answer. If you could accurately anticipate the needs of the plant, and meet them immediately, chances are the grower would come out all right without any organics.

Get in the habit of distinguishing between water-insoluble and water-soluble organic nitrogen. The soluble forms convert rapidly into ammoniacal nitrogen in the soil.

Your growers should understand that the water-insoluble forms commonly used will release only $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ of their nitrogen during comparatively short growing periods, and that most of this becomes available during the first 8 weeks.

Very truly yours,

F. S. JAMISON
Vegetable Crop Specialist

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