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TO: VEGETABLE AND HORTICULTURE AGENTS
AND COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTORS

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I. NOTES OF INTEREST

A. New Publications

Available from the Belle Glade AREC, P.O. Drawer A, Belle Glade, FL 33430.


Available from the Bradenton AREC, 5007 60th St. East, Bradenton, FL 33508.


2. Response of Four Tomato Cultivars to Fertilizer Levels and In-Row Spacing, Research Report GC 1981-11, by A. A. Csizinsky.


(Maynard)
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B. Vegetable Crops Calendar

February 16: Florida Seedsmen's Conference, Hilton Inn, Gainesville.


April 20: Sanford AREC Open House and Research Update.

April 28: Immokalee ARC Field Day.

(Maynard)

II. PESTICIDE UPDATE

A. Crisis Exemption For Use Of Benomyl On Lettuce

Doyle Conner, Commissioner of Agriculture, FDACS, in a January 8th Mailgram to Mrs. Anne Gorsuch, EPA, declared that a crisis condition exists for the lettuce industry due to severe disease problems and climatic stress conditions. Therefore, utilizing the crises exemption provisions contained in Part 166.8, Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, he has stated that the use of benomyl (Benlate) to control Sclerotinia drop and Rhizoctonia bottom rot on lettuce will be allowed in Florida effective that date.

A request for specific exemption was submitted on January 4, 1982.

(Stall)

III. COMMERCIAL VEGETABLE PRODUCTION

A. The Problem of Attendance

Attendance at commercial and cooperative extension meetings of which I have been a part in the past four or five
months has been critically low. This poor attendance may or may not express a lack of interest in the program offered. It may have been a "sign of the times", indicating that people are looking critically at almost everything and establishing a priority of expense, time invested, and expected take-home value of the meeting. Whatever the cause, we in extension must face this problem more realistically than ever before in our times of declining travel budgets, emphasis on broader program, and accent on the mass information approach.

First, we need to consider the cost-benefit of the meeting to the vegetable grower. Are the topics on target? Could the topic help the person to solve a key problem, increase efficiency, or reduce costs? An advisory committee can be very helpful in determining the need for a meeting of growers, and their advice on topics should be seriously considered if the committee consists of active and effective members.

The expense of meetings to the county or state usually increases as the length of program, number of speakers involved, fanciness of the facilities, refreshments, or meal provided increases. Tighter budgets of the current period are not unique to county and state extension workers as the allied industries are walking the same road, too.

Perhaps we need to include in the publicity for an intended meeting (after a felt need has been established) a statement such as this:

"This meeting was requested by an advisory committee of your (co-workers, farm friends, etc). The meeting should help you to increase your efficiency, reduce costs, or increase your cost-benefit relationship on these topics. Because of the expense of such a meeting we will need to know if a minimum of attendance of (25-30-100?) can be expected to justify this effort. Please call or send in the attached card to indicate your intention to attend or not. This is not a legal or binding commitment. If we do not receive notice that a minimum attendance is to be expected this meeting will be canceled two weeks before that date."
Would this help? We have to do something about the empty chairs and the declining budget.

(Marlowe)

B. 1982 Watermelon Planting Intentions

The Florida Crop and Livestock Reporting Service estimated the expected watermelon plantings in Florida for the 1982 season at 57,000 acres, nearly 6% more than the 54,000 acres planted in the 1981 season.

In the January 22 report, they indicate that in the southwest the transplanted acreage was hurt by freezing temperatures on January 12, causing variable damage in many fields. Most fields came through in fair condition but spot replanting will be necessary. The planting was underway in December, and replanting and planting of new acreage will continue into February.

In the southeast where the total acreage is small, plants just emerging were killed by freezing temperatures and will have to be replanted. Planting and replanting will continue into February.

In the west central, planting was underway during January. There was no damage reported but seeds have not germinated because of the cold weather. Planting will continue through February.

In the north central, north and west, land preparation was just getting underway. Seeding is expected to begin in late January in the north central, and early to mid February in the north and west depending on weather conditions.

The report goes on to state that acreage may differ significantly from these intentions due to many reasons. The report will be updated in April.

(Stall)
IV. HOME VEGETABLE GARDENING

A. Know Your Minor Vegetables - Truffles

The truffles of commerce are ascomycete fungi which form subterranean fruit-bodies. They are hypogeous discomycetes of the order Tuberales, more specifically Tuber melanosporum (the Perigord truffle) and T. magnatum (the white truffle of Piedmont), and a number of other species.

Common British truffle species are Tuber rufum, Tuber puberulum, and Tuber excavatum. The fruit-bodies are globe shaped, up to 3 cm in diameter. In section they consist of an outer peridium (covering), often of thick-walled cells, and a gleba (central fertile part), traversed by darker veins which represent the hymenium (spore bearing surface). Unlike many common mushrooms which have external hymenium, the truffle's hymenium is not open to the outside and the spores are not discharged violently. Spores are thought to be disseminated through the action of small animals feeding on the fruit-bodies.

The Perigord truffle is associated with the roots of Quercus spp. (oaks) in France, both in the wild and in cultivations. The tiny truffles, fruit-bodies from 1 to 3 centimeters in diameter, are not easily found. They are often collected with the aid of trained dogs and pigs who detect them by smell. Experienced truffle experts are sometimes able to spot the fungi by the characteristic heaving of the soil beneath the oak trees, by the droppings of rodents such as rabbits and squirrels who feed on them, and by the presence of truffle flies.

In cultivation, wild Quercus trees are moved to the cultivated area, and soil from beneath the trees where truffles were found is placed in proximity to the transplanted tree roots. Crops of truffles develop after about seven years and are gathered by raking the soil under the trees.

Hart's truffle (Elaphomyces) is reported to be the most common British hypogaeous fungus and can be collected year round beneath the litter layers of various trees, particularly beech. These range in size from 1 to 4 cm. when cut open,
an outer rind can be distinguished from a central mass of spore bearing asci. Little is known about the conditions necessary for the germination of the spores.

In U.S. gourmet food establishments, truffles are a very expensive food item primarily due to their restricted locale and unique method of production. Little information is available on the success or failure of attempts to cultivate the truffle in the U.S. Truffles are used in such gourmet food items as pate's (goose liver spreads) and sauces.

(Stephens)

B. Starting Potatoes from True Seeds

Irish potatoes are usually started from the vegetative tubers cut into two-ounce pieces, each containing at least one "eye". This season, however, home gardeners are being offered a new variety, 'Explorer', which is started from true seed. In 1982, a dozen mail-order seed companies are offering the 'Explorer' potato. These include Burpee, Field, Gurney, Harris, Hastings, Herbst, Johnny's, May, Olds, Park, Stokes, and Twilley.

'Explorer' is being billed as the first open-pollinated potato from seed that is virtually free of wide variations in plant characteristics and which has at least 80% seed germination. It is reported to be the result of seven years of intensive plant breeding by Dr. Scott Trees, Pan American Seed.

Although the domestic potato, Solanum tuberosum, commonly reproduces vegetatively, sexual reproduction plays an important role for the wild diploid species in South America. However, seedlings result in a vast array of plant sizes, shapes, and productive ability. Most of the introductions of foreign potato varieties must be propagated and maintained vegetatively because they do not reproduce or breed true to their original type when grown from true seed, and many produce few, if any, true seeds under normal conditions of culture. The vegetative maintenance of original lines is time-consuming and expensive.
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Flower production and seed formation occur in the garden only when the plants have ideal growing conditions with especially cool temperatures (easily produced in greenhouses). Whenever cross-fertilization is successful, the ovaries develop in about 10 days, and about 60 days later the potato fruit develops, resembling a small green tomato which does not change color upon ripening. Most seed balls (fruits) contain from 100 to 300 mature seed. The seed, which resemble miniature tomato seed without fuzz, germinate erratically soon after maturity. After storage for a few months they will germinate and grow more readily. Each of the small plants originating from the seed constitutes a potential new variety.

The 'Explorer' potato has yet to be tried in Florida gardens or fields. It remains to be seen just how productive it will be, especially when compared to our standard varieties and method of culture from seedpieces.

For gardeners who wish to try the 'Explorer', plant seeds as you would tomato or pepper. Since it is experimental, it might be best to plant seeds in plant growing containers to obtain a 4 to 6 week old transplant before setting out-of-doors. In Florida, seedlings should be set in the garden January through February, (March for trial only). 'Explorer' is said to germinate in 14 days and mature from 90 to 120 days. Each hill should produce 2 to 3 pounds of a white fleshed, light russet potato for general use.

(Stephens)

C. Master Gardener Program

Florida's Master Gardener program continues to grow and expand with training of volunteers just beginning in four new counties.

On the east coast, Broward and Palm Beach counties are meeting in Ft. Lauderdale. On the west coast, Polk, Pinellas, and Pasco counties are meeting in Hillsborough County.
Both programs began the second week of January. There are 70 potential Master Gardeners in the groups; all seem very interested in helping their extension office by communicating their horticulture expertise to their communities.

Dade, Hillsborough, and Brevard counties completed their training and brought into their strong programs 55 additional Master Gardeners.

Dean App, Asst. Dean for Agricultural Programs, recently sent a memorandum to all District Extension Directors concerning the Master Gardener Program. This memo requested that the Director make an assessment of counties desiring to participate in the Master Gardener Program, and report back to me.

If your county has an interest in this program, let your District Extension Director know. I welcome your input about this program.

(McDonald)

D. 4-H and Other Youth

4-H and FFA members from around the state will be traveling to the Florida State Fair in Tampa to compete in many activities during the next few weeks. One such activity will be an Ornamental Horticulture Identification and Judging Contest. The contest consist of 100 different ornamental plants, and two classes to judge.

The event will take place on Saturday, February 13. Registration will begin at 8:30am and judging will start at 9:00am. This contest will include two divisions: FFA and 4-H. Contestants from both organizations will view the classes together. Tabulations and awards will be handled separately. Participation is limited to 4-H and FFA members from the State of Florida. A team consists of three to four members; only the scores of the three highest members will be considered in awarding team prizes. The Florida State Fair Authority will provide trophies for the 1st through 5th place teams and highest individual. Rosettes will be presented to each member of the 1st place team.
For further information about this contest, call Ann McDonald, Vegetable Crops Department, or Bob Black, Ornamental Horticulture Department, University of Florida.

(McDonald)

Statement: "This public document was promulgated at a cost of $151.10 or 24¢ per copy for the purpose of communicating current technical and educational materials to extension, research and industry personnel."