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NEWS ABOUT THE Farm GARDEN

ORCHARDS THICK WITH MICE; URGES CHECK BY GROWERS

Both large scale fruit growers and backyard orchardists would be wise to check for mice around their apple trees right now.

That's a tip from Don Haynes, Michigan State College zoologist, who has been inspecting orchards for mice damage recently. He has found mice populations that he terms "dangerously high" in some areas.

He advises looking for runways under matted grass or other mulch cover. The runways are the places to stop the pests with poison. Pieces of apple cubs that have been sprinkled with zinc phosphide make good bait, according to Haynes. He also recommends baits that have been prepared with strychnine or cracked corn that has been treated with zinc phosphide.

A new river dock to handle large shipments of some 2 million tons of coal annually to provide power for an atomic energy plant being built on the Ohio River at Yanketown, Indiana.

New Chemicals Being Perfected To Give Plants Built-In Bug Killer

Plants are getting their own built-in weapon against one of their biggest enemies — the bugs.

New chemicals sprayed on plants or applied to the soil can go through the plant's circulatory system. When an insect sucks the sap or chews on the plant, the pest is dealt a knockout blow.

These poisonous chemicals last longer than ordinary insecticides — they go inside the plant and won't wash off. They are called systemics. Tests being made by a Michigan State College entomologist, J. R. Hoffman, show promise of better things to come. He is testing what scientists call "organophosphorus compounds."

Their deadly power as systemics was discovered by a German scientist working to develop new war gases for the Nazis during World War II. These compounds are more dangerous to humans than other insect-killing chemicals now in common use.

Only two systemics have been approved for use on crops in the U. S. The first is schradan, which some nurserymen and greenhouse operators are using to control spider mites, aphids and thrips. The other, demeton, is effective against spider mites and aphids.

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Grass Care Now Will Determine Growth In Spring

The way your grass survives the winter and how it grows early next spring depends entirely on what you do this fall.

By taking time now to fertilize, mulch, water and reseed, you'll get a lawn that will start spring with a bang. That's when you can sit back and watch the man next door try to prod his lawn into keeping pace.

So get the jump on your neighbor — these six jumps are suggested.

Grass has a tough time in compacted soil. Aerate hard spots and places where grass is thin. Spiking not only helps air and water enter the soil, but helps get fertilizer near the roots.

Fertilize four to six weeks before the first killing frost. Plants will use the food for fall growth and vital reserves, and they'll be past the succulent stage before winter arrives. Apply when the grass is dry and wash it in thoroughly.

If the fall is dry, give your lawn deep thorough waterings rather than frequent sprinklings. Don't stop when the grass loses its color. The soil should be kept moist until the ground freezes to prevent excessive winter kill.

Keep your mower going until all grass growth stops, however, don't cut off more than one-half inch at any one time or cut any closer than 1 1/2 inches. Short clippings will sift down among the grass blades to serve as a mulch and eventually add humus to the soil.

You can turn those fallen leaves into valuable humus mulch for the lawn right where they lie. It's easy with one of the new leaf-mulching attachments for rotary mowers. Or if you prefer, gather the leaves and compost them.

It's nature's seeding time, so patch bare and thin spots now. Plant cool-season grasses, such as bluegrasses, five to six weeks before frost so roots establish before winter.

TENT CATERPILLAR EPIDEMIC SHOWS DECLINE IN STATE

Forest tent caterpillars — the long, blue crawlers that have been chewing their way across northern Michigan forests during the last few years — are definitely on the decline.

"Some increases have been noted in localized areas," says Richard Fox, conservation department entomologist. "But viewing the picture over-all, the infestation is on the way down."

Fox says the caterpillars have been at epidemic numbers for the last three years. They are always present, but increase and decrease in a general ten-year cycle. In the next year or two, if all goes according to past pattern, the epidemic should be about ended.

Next week, state foresters will start a month-long survey of the problem in the upper and northern lower peninsulas.

They will try to determine the extent of the decline and will look for areas that an expect new local outbreaks next spring. One such buildup was noted this year in parts of Delta County.

CARE URGED WHEN WORKING AROUND CORN ELEVATORS

Gears, sprockets and chains that aren't shielded on corn elevators can take some of the joy out of using these labor-savers.

That's the warning from George Amundson, extension agricultural engineer. He says that these open sprockets can be dangerous to even careful workers.

Now that it's corn harvesting time Amundson warns farmers to watch out for some of the habits that lead to accidents.

One bad habit is working with an open jacket or loose clothing — perfect for catching in open gears. Amundson also advises keeping children away from running machines. Uncovered drive shafts have also claimed the number of victims in past harvest seasons.

Amundson cautions farmers to watch for electric wires overhead when moving the elevator. High elevators and low wires make a dangerous combination.

Farm Land Value Rises Slightly

The dollar value of farm land in Michigan took a slight upswing this last spring and summer. But the value in July of this year still was three per cent below that of July 1953.

That is shown in the current issue of the U. S. Department of Agriculture publication, "The Farm Real Estate Market." The publication notes:

"Asking prices for land have continued firm to slightly higher in southern Michigan because of the continuing demand for farms by young men who want to start farming and by factory workers."

"With urban employment opportunities more limited, farming has again become an alternative for both young men on farms who previously found ready employment in industry, and for unemployed factory workers."

The publication says that many factory workers have accumulated substantial savings in recent years and they are "effective bidders" for farms.

FARM CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 14 - 15, National FFA Livestock Judging, Kansas City, Missouri.

October 18 - 19, Michigan Association of Farmer Cooperatives, Michigan State College.

October 19, Grand Rapids District Home Demonstration Rally, Community Building in Fremont.

October 21 - 22, Michigan Feed Conference, Kellogg Center, Michigan State College.

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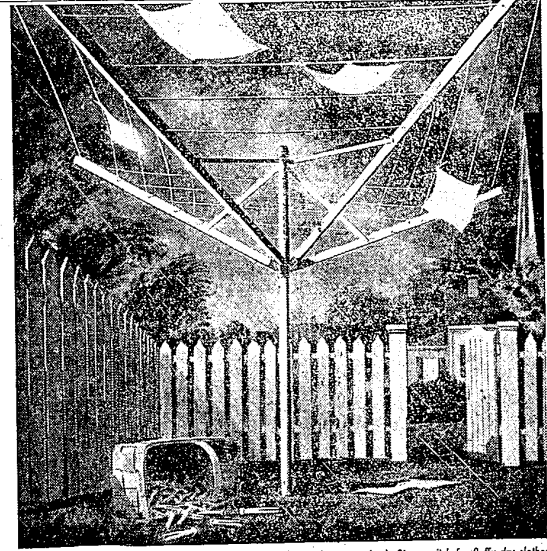
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