



EXAMS - Joay Chavis ponders a physical science test during Hoke High's semester exams last week. Vacation break for students followed the ordeal.

SCS Activities

F. O. Clark, District Conservationist

It soon will be time to begin farming activities for 1975. In this day of higher prices, it is well to think of doing better farming with less capital outlay.

We will begin a series this week on mulch tillage. I hope that this will be of benefit to many of you. The information is taken from a pamphlet issued by the US Department of Agriculture and written by J.T. McAllister, equipment engineer, Soil Conservation Service.

In all parts of the country there is a move toward "minimum tillage" - that is, stirring the soil just as little as possible in producing a crop.

Mulch tillage is the southeastern Coastal Plain's form of minimum tillage. Row crops are planted directly in cover crops, in established sods, or in crop residues of the previous crop without any land preparation beforehand. It is somewhat similar to practices known as plow planting and wheel-track planting in other areas.

Mulch tillage is possible because of the advancements made in farm equipment in the last 10 to 15 years. It requires different equipment or attachments from that on many farms.

Mulch tillage saves time and labor - and therefore money - and at extremely busy times of the year. It saves because you don't have to burn, plow, disk, or harrow before you plant row crops. In the spring you can plant at the time that you would normally be plowing. And after grain harvest your planter can follow right behind your combine.

Mulch tillage saves both soil and

moisture. Moreover, it makes use of crop residues to improve the soil structure or tith, maintain organic matter, and provide good working conditions for soil bacteria.

Winter cover crops and crop residue can remain on the land longer in winter and into the spring, giving longer protection against wind and water erosion.

It supplements terracing, stripcropping, and other well-known erosion-control practices for sloping land. Since there is no plowing, there are no dead furrows to disturb row drainage and less maintenance is required on terraced land. On gentle slopes mulch tillage on the contour may replace terracing and stripcropping since each mulch-tilled furrow acts as a miniature terrace.

Mulch tillage protects flatland from wind erosion and the impact of falling raindrops. And the furrows protect young plants from wind damage.

Mulch tillage saves moisture by slowing down evaporation as well as runoff since plowing, harrowing, and burning dry out the soil. Sometimes this means you can plant when you would otherwise have to wait for rain. And when it does rain, the unworked crop residue in the middle lets water soak in before it has a chance to evaporate or run off.

So far in the Southeast, mulch tillage has had its widest acceptance in areas where soils with sandy loams and loamy sands are common. These soils make up most of the area planted to annual row

crops and small grain. They are friable, level to sloping, well-drained, acid soils. They have medium organic content and low to medium moisture-holding capacity. Water moves through them easily.

Mulch tillage in the Southeast was first used for planting soybeans in grain stubble without first burning the straw and stubble. The planter followed directly behind the combine. This left the crop residue on the land to improve the soil and help conserve soil and water. Also it meant that the beans could be planted earlier - the moisture was right for planting without waiting for rain.

Now equipment has been developed to plant corn in established sod and in winter cover crops such as blue lupine, oats, and vetch without plowing the land ahead of planting. Such direct planting allows maximum growth of the cover crop for soil improvement.

Dairy and beef cattle farmers find they can plant their corn directly in their winter-grazing crops, or they can plant it after small grain that has been cut for hay, silage, or "green chop." Soybeans, sorghums, and millet can also be planted in winter-grazing crops. (To be continued)

Trustee Omitted

A longtime trustee of McLaughlin Chapel, George Clark, was omitted from The News-Journal story last week about the church. We regret the oversight.

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