

Agriculture

First day of Spring is close

March 20 is the first day of spring, and Arbor Day to boot.

Fertilize pansies.
Add organic matter to garden areas now before main planting begins. Every year you should add at least two inches of compost, peat moss, wheat straw, small pine nuggets, and sawdust.

Rejuvenate phlox beds every three years by dividing the plants. Fill the bottom of holes spaced two feet apart with peat moss to provide good air movement necessary for drying plant foliage. Otherwise, mildew can become a problem if late summer is rainy and wet.

Rose-of-sharon shrubs can easily reach a height of 15 feet in eight or ten years if they are not controlled regularly. Do not be afraid to cut oversized shrubs back to as little as 18 inches. Fertilize now, and again about mid-summer.

Potato plants are hungriest for nitrogen during the first four weeks they are developing. Make sure potato beds are receiving 1/2 pound of nitrogen per 100 square feet.

Early spring hay fever is due mainly from tree pollen. If you have allergies, avoid these trees right now: birches, hickories, cypresses, junipers, sycamores, oaks and poplars.

Finish ordering annual flower seeds so they may be started as soon



as possible.

New varieties include Sanvitalia (creeping zinnia) Mandarin Orange, third ranked All-American Selection for 1987. This is a superb edging or hanging basket plant. The small daisy-like flower with dark centers bloom in profusion on spreading mounds of 12 inch high foliage.

Another winner is Park's 'Dreamland Mixture' of zinnias, resistant to mildew and attain a height of about 18 inches.

There is also 'Think Pink' ageratum from Burpee; 'Aurora' marigold from Park that blooms two weeks earlier, blooms longer, and holds its color better than comparable French varieties; and the 'Novette Star' series of pentunias from Stokes.

New herbs include another AAS winner, 'Purple Ruffles' basil, with a companion, 'Green Ruffles', introduced by Park Seed.

Johnny's Selected Seeds has new chervil called 'Brussels Winter' that develops into a bigger and more

bushy plant than the old strains. Yet another winner is Earl May's 'Sherwood', an extremely curly parsley that keeps its dark color even after several harvests.

Ever wonder how a variety gets chosen as an All American Selection? I've found out for us. There are 27 vegetable and 32 flower trail locations for AAS in the U.S. and Canada.

Judges are volunteers, selected people from the seed industry, botanical gardens and universities. Anonymous entries are scored by a point system. An entered variety is grown beside a similar older variety so they may be compared.

Bluebirds have been declining in numbers for 40 years. But now they are beginning to return to our area because gardeners and conservationists are providing bluebird boxes and "bluebird trails." The Bird Lady says she has spotted as many as 14 birds at the Newbold White House in Perquimans County. So she got us some bluebird boxes. So I had a housewarming party. Nobody came. I'm stuck with two dozen bug biscuits and a box of dried snails I had fixed for hor d'oeuvres. So I'm going to write The North American Bluebird Society (Box 6295, Silver Spring, MD 20906) for helpful information. I want my own bluebird family to enjoy this year.



Above Paige Underwood, Home Economics Extension Agent works with a member of the clothing workshop on construction of her blazer. The clothing workshop was held last week at the Perquimans County Extension Office.

Farmers should insure quality of seeds before planting them

The pressure is on to cut costs at practically every point of expenditures, but it may be false economy for the farmer to sacrifice the assurance of quality in seed in order to buy non-certified seed from the bin.

"There are always seed available that don't cost as much as top quality certified seed," points out Perquimans County Agricultural Extension Agent, Stan Winslow. "But these seed have an unknown or uncertain background and origin and are of undetermined quality," he adds.

Be sure that seed you purchase are labeled for variety, germination and purity. The best of these are the certified seed that carry the information on a blue tag. This blue tag certifies that the particular lot of seed has been tested and meets certification standards. If you plan to use seed from you bids, have them tested. The N.C. Seed Testing Lab will test them free of charge. All they need is a two pound sample.

Information found on the seed tag is listed and explained below. Winslow urges farmers to learn what to look for on a seed tag, to set standards for the seed they are going to buy and then shop until they find seed that meet those standards.

Kind and Variety—the kind of crop refers to the species (soybeans, cot-

ton, etc) and is always given on the seed tag. Variety may or may not be stated on the analysis tag. Under this variety definition, a hybrid is acceptable as a variety name. If the variety is not given, the seed tag should have the statement: "Variety Not Stated."

Pure seed—Pure seed percentage gives the percent of total weight of the kind and variety stated on the analysis tag. If more than one kind and variety is named, the pure seed percentage of each component must be stated. Generally, farmers choose seed with a higher seed percentage (98 percent or more) of one kind and variety.

Germination—The percent of pure seed that germinated in a standard test is printed on the analysis tag. This percentage is based on a number of seeds that produce normal seedlings. A normal seedling is one that has the seed structure necessary for survival. Growers should remember that germination percentage is based on pure seed and not on the total content of the bag. Most farmers desire seed that are high (80 percent or higher) in germination. Some samples sent in from Perquimans County this year have tested as low as a 50 percent normal—30 percent weak germination.

Those testing less than 70 percent normal germ should only be used as a last resort.

Other Crop Seeds—This includes the percentage of crop seed other than the kind and variety listed. In the field, other crop plants may be as troublesome as weedy plants. Corn in soybean seeds provides an example.

Weed Seeds—Presence of weed seeds is expressed in percentage of total weight. This classification includes seeds, bulblets, or tubers of plants recognized by official regulations or general usage as common weeds. High quality seed should contain no or very low percentage of weed seeds.

Noxious Weed Seed—Noxious weeds are plants that are extremely difficult to control by normal cultural practices. The name and number of noxious weed seeds, bulblets, or tubers per pound must be printed on the analysis tag.

"Set some quality standards before buying seed," Winslow added. "To determine if the seeds you want to buy meet these standards, read and use the information on the seed analysis tag. Always save a sample of seed from each lot purchased. Attach a seed tag to the sample. If you have problems you can go back to your sample to confirm the quality of the seed you purchased."

Impacts of timber tax studied

Landowners filing 1986 tax returns will see no changes in federal income tax treatment of timber income or expense according to Stanley J. Winslow, Perquimans County Extension Director. Net timber income received in 1986 still qualifies for the long-term capital gains exclusion which exempts 60 percent of timber income from taxation. The basic qualifications are that the timber be held over six months and sold under appropriate IRS code sections depending on whether the seller is a casual investor or in the timber business. For individuals, 1986 timber income should be reported on Schedule D to take advantage of long-term capital gains. Beginning January 1, 1987, the long-term capital gains exclusion is history. However, some taxpayers may still get a break on such income in 1987, since tax reform has established a 28 percent maximum rate on long term capital gains for 1987. Other income will be taxed at 11, 15, 28, 35 or 38.5 percent due

1987, giving those taxpayers in the 35 or 38.5 percent brackets a break on long-term capital gains income. In 1988, there will be no advantage for long-term capital gains.

Reforestation tax incentives remain unchanged under tax reform Winslow continues. A 10 percent investment tax credit may be claimed against up to \$10,000 of site preparation, seedling and planting costs incurred in a given tax year. These costs may also be written off as deductions over the first 84 months following reforestation.

Timber management incurred each year remain fully deductible for 1986. The following changes became effective January 1, 1987. Taxpayers actively involved in a timber business may continue to deduct all management costs annually as business deductions. Taxpayers not in the business of growing timber will not be able to deduct all expenses. Active managers who materially participate on a continuous basis in timber

management activities may continue to deduct annual expenses as miscellaneous deductions. However, beginning in 1987, only miscellaneous deductions which exceed 2 percent of one's adjusted gross income may be claimed Winslow continues, and this will reduce slightly the tax advantages of these deductions. Passive investors in timber may use timber expense deductions only to offset other passive income. A record should be kept of any unused deductions, as they may be subtracted from timber income in future years to lower net timber gains.



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Perquimans farmers to take part in national corn yield contest

Several Perquimans County corn growers were among more than 1,700 farmers nationwide who, in 1986, participated in a program to determine whether the herbicide they use makes a difference in yields. The Perquimans County growers included: Ed L. Nixon and Gene Perry, Hertford.

Farmers in North Carolina, including those Perquimans County, were part of a "Yield Challenge" program offered, for the third consecutive year, by Monsanto. Growers were challenged to plant side-by-side plots comparing Lasso herbicide to Dual; and observe firsthand which herbicide delivers a yield advantage.

"Given the current economic situation, farmers are studying input costs more carefully and analyzing the return per dollar invested," explains Steve Askew, Monsanto district manager. "That's one reason so many farmers accept our challenge: to see if the herbicide they used could produce a higher yield and, therefore, a better return on investment."

Of the 84 North Carolina farmers who participated in the program and took their plots to harvest, Askew reports 74 percent found that their on-farm trial plots showed a yield advantage in favor of Lasso.

All corn growers in the "Yield

Challenge" program used the same tillage practices on each of their plots, as well as the same method of herbicide application, seed corn variety and fertilization program. Both plots had the same previous crop history and each herbicide was used at labeled rates.

"The results of North Carolina growers, who recorded a yield advantage with Lasso or pre-mixed Lasso & atrazine, show that their plots produced an average of 6.63 bushels per acre more than identical plots treated with Dual or Bicep (a mixture of Dual and atrazine)," says Askew.

Participating farmers rated grass and broadleaf weed control at harvest equal, or better, in 95 percent of all plots.

Results of the on-farm program reaffirm earlier studies which show a yield advantage with Lasso. "Careful

herbicide selection to reduce stress can make a positive difference in yields," Askew concludes.

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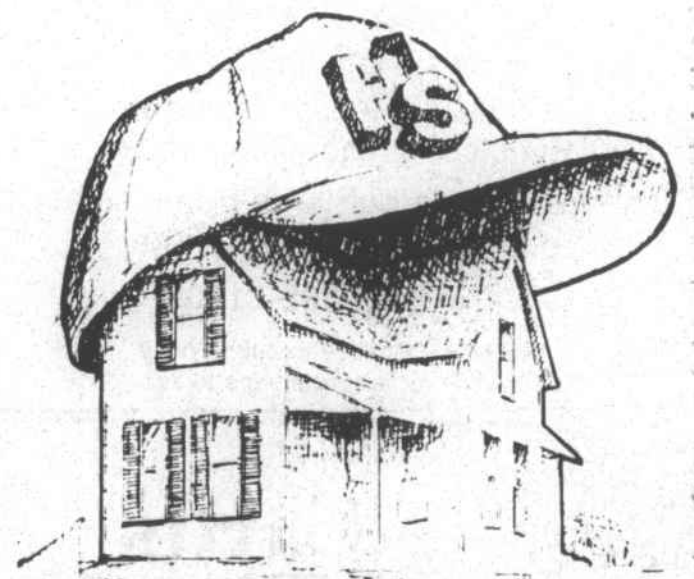
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Stocker sale outlined

By JEFF COPELAND
Area Specialized Agent
Livestock

Cattle producers can participate in the Ayden Graded Stocker Sale on March 24. Consignment sheets are available in the County Agricultural Extension Office. These need to be mailed to Pitt County by March 18.

Calves are delivered and graded on March 23 from 8:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m. Sale day is March 24 at 10 a.m. Producers will not be mailed sales information automatically so if you know of anyone needing consignment sheets and regulations, please contact us at (426-5428; 482-8431; or 357-1400).

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