

Agriculture

Water softeners cause problems for plants

If your house plants are breaking off close to the soil line, blame your water softener. Try watering plants with bottled or rain water and see the difference. Water softeners replace magnesium and calcium salts with sodium ions, which are quite toxic to plants.

Prune hydrangeas. Because of the mild winter, above ground growth was not winter-killed as it has been in the past, so you will not have to be so drastic. If the stem bends with pressure, it is most likely alive.

Harvest horseradish. Don't worry about getting them all because it will not happen. In fact, if you peel horseradish and put the peelings back in the ground, they will root. What tenacity.

Another hint from HortIdeas: Scatter horseradish leaves in the potato patch; keeps potato beetles under control.

Thin radishes and carrots. Wash the thinnings and use in vegetable salads.

Continue harvesting leafy crops like lettuce and spinach. Aphids can be controlled by spraying greens with a mild detergent a few days before harvesting.

Treat broccoli and cabbage with *Bacillus thuringus* for looper and cabbage worm control.

Keep potatoes well mulched. Examine plants for varmints, and hand pick if possible.

Plant gladioli, caladiums, and dahlias.

Thin fruit on trees, especially plums, which are prone to rampant growth. Prune fruits to three inches apart.

Strawberries will benefit from a



drink of cow manure tea.

Gray fruit mold is the most important strawberry disease, says NCSU horticulturists. Reducing yields by 50 percent or more, gray mold is most severe when frequent rains occur during bloom and fruiting. Rotting fruit is covered with fuzzy gray masses of fungal growth. To reduce fruit rot, spray every 7 to 10 days with captan at the rate of four tablespoons per gallon of water.

Next year try crop rotation and renewal of plantings. Grow only those varieties adapted to your part of the state. Details on strawberry production are available at your local extension office.

Consider Zoysia

If you are considering a new lawn this year, NCSU horticulturists say you might like zoysia, which is well adapted to the Coastal Plain.

They describe zoysia as a low-growing, creeping grass that makes a dense, very wear-resistant turf. I personally would like it for its drought resistant qualities.

Zoysia grass must be started from sprigs and is slow to establish, so have patience, but this will be an advantage later, when you don't have to mow as much.

It responds better to a rotary mower than the reel type.

Choose from three varieties: 1) Meyer, comparable to Kentucky bluegrass in texture, good for home lawns; 2) Emerald, very fine texture, extremely wear-resistant, and spreads faster than the other kind; 3) Matrella, good for coastal regions because of its tolerance to salt spray.

As with any lawn, start with a soil test. Spread lime and seedbed fertilizer according to the soil test instructions. Work both components in six to eight inches deep. Rake or harrow the area to make it as smooth as possible.

Sprig in May, June, or July, using one-sixth to 1/4 square yard of sprigs per 1,000 square feet. Press the sprigs into the top one-half inch of soil. Water as soon as lawn is sprigged, and keep the surface moist until plants are well established.

When grass begins to grow, fertilize with one-half to one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet every two to three weeks until frost.

When growing, the color and texture of zoysia is absolutely elegant.

Zoysia has poor winter color, but owners don't seem to be bothered by this disadvantage. Those that do, however, have the grass dyed green. I'm not kidding—I knew a lot of home owners in Augusta, Ga., when I lived there years ago, who did precisely that. Lots of guys would come out with a big truck and sprayers. Two hours later—a green, green, very green lawn. It was the weirdest green I've ever seen.

Maybe they've improved the dye by now. Sure hope so.



Pictured is Stan Winslow, Perquimans County Extension Director and Mr. Garland Stallings, route 1, Belvidere, receiving an award at the 5000 Pound Peanut Club luncheon in Williamston on March 13th. Mr. Stallings produced 5136 pounds on one farm. He also averaged 4580 pounds of peanuts per acre on his entire crop to become the Peanut Champion for 1986. Also receiving an award but not pictured was Jarvis D. Winslow, Jr. for a yield of 5067 pounds per acre.

Farming issues to watch

Farm news seems to be dominated by three issues—farm programs, credit and trade. Because of the 1988 election, farm programs will remain a hot topic even if Congress does nothing more than talk about it.

Shoring up the Farm Credit System, a secondary market for farm loans and restructuring farmers' debts are important aspects of the credit issue. Trade is the biggest issue but agriculture is just one part of it.

As important as these concerns are there are others that present a very real challenge to agriculture. For example, there's the issue of groundwater pollution and the farmers' liability for it. In the west, farmers are threatened with losing grazing privileges on public lands. Environmentalists are trying to force them off the

range by making grazing permits too costly.

Animal rights is again in the forefront. First, veal production was attacked and now caged layers and pigs. The Humane Society of the United States recently asked its supporters to give up bacon and egg breakfasts.

Then there are these people who want a risk free society, even though they have been told it is impossible. A bill in Congress would create a new federal agency responsible for notifying the public of occupational health hazards in high risk industries. This could lead to unwieldy and costly regulations on farms which would further hamper the farmers' efforts in providing an abundant supply of food and fiber.

Lock-in proves successful

By JUANITA T. BAILEY
Home Economics Ext. Agent

A recent 4-H Lock-In held at the Perquimans Senior Center was a big hit with county 4-H'ers. The lock-in, which was held Easter Monday and Tuesday began with a "Getting to Know You" mixer for the group. Highlights included a discussion of Drug and Alcohol Abuse led by Perquimans County Sheriff, Joe Lothian, self-esteem building activities, trusting games, lead by PiH County's 4-H

TRY Team (Teens Reaching Youth) and midnight ghost stories led by several 4-H'er's. This lock-in was specifically designed to help teens develop positive self esteem, develop trust in others and learn how to avoid involvement in the ever growing problem of Drug and Alcohol Abuse. Special thanks is extended to 4-H leaders, Mary White and Emma Burke for their assistance in planning and conducting this 4-H Lock-In.

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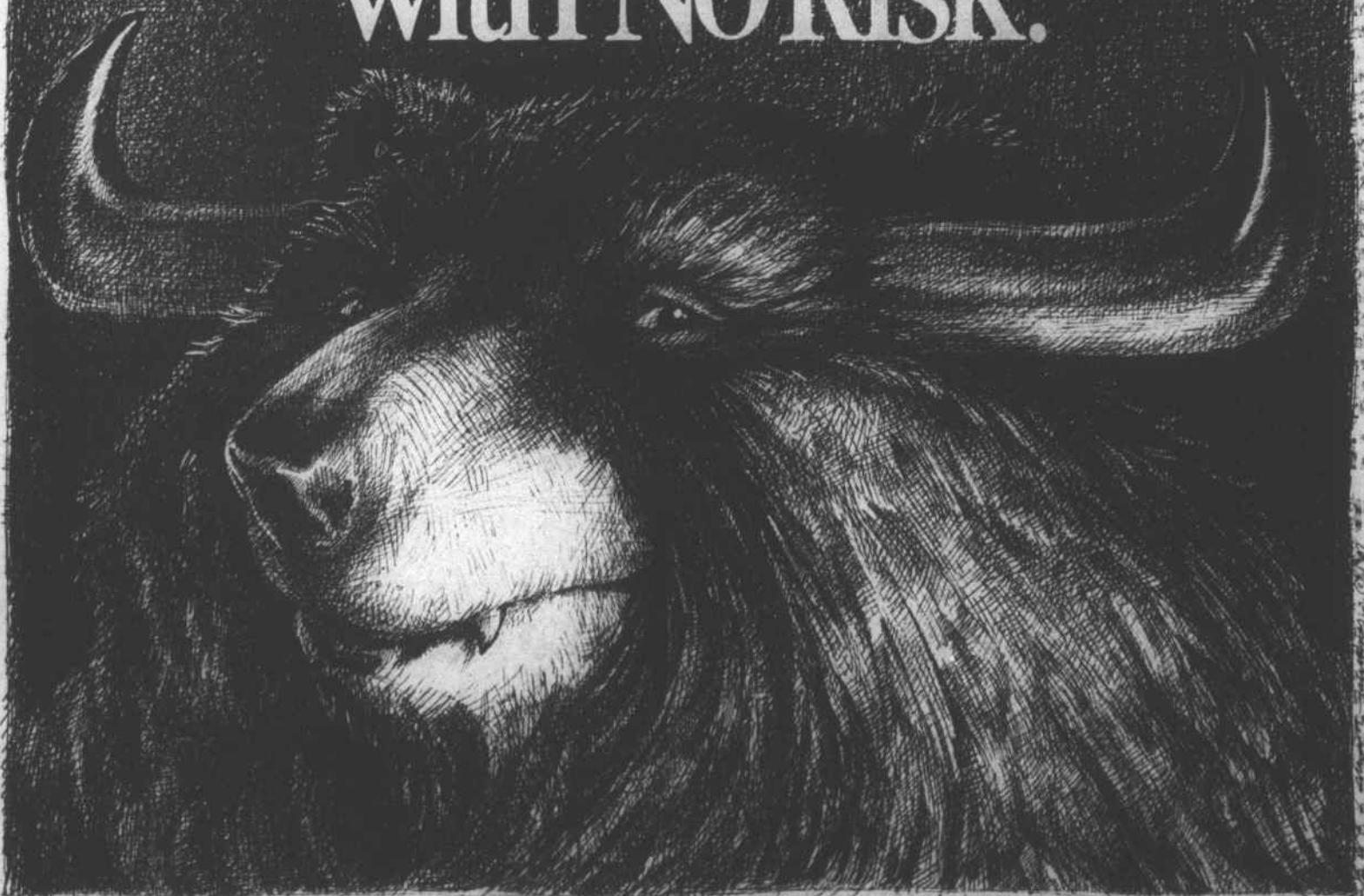
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