PLANT PEST *Newsletter*

MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE — UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

PPST24 — January, 1993

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MISCELLANEOUS

PLANT DISEASE CLINIC

SEED QUALITY TESTING—Now is a good time to submit wheat samples for seed quality testing. The Plant Disease Clinic is conducting seed quality testing on wheat to be used as seed. Seed quality is evaluated on the basis of a germination test, an emergence/vigor test, and a culture test. Test results will indicate the potential stand the grower could expect if the tested seedlot was used for sowing.

Please follow these guidelines when submitting seed for testing:

1) Submit 1/4 pound of seed. Collect several subsamples from the seedlot and mix thoroughly to ensure a representative sample.
2) Allow 4 weeks for test results.
3) The fee is $25.00, payable to the University of Minnesota.
4) Send or deliver to:
   Plant Disease Clinic
   495 Borlaug Hall
   1991 Upper Buford Circle
   University of Minnesota
   St. Paul, MN 55108

Sandee Gould
Plant Disease Clinic

For more information regarding the Plant Pest Newsletter contact Extension Plant Pathology at 612-625-6290

MISCELLANEOUS/Continued

1993 VARIETAL TRIALS PUBLICATION NOW AVAILABLE—Eagerly awaited each January by Minnesota farmers, seed suppliers and extension educators is the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station's, *Varietal Trials of Selected Farm Crops.*

The 1993 edition, which once again includes trials of winter rye varieties, is now available.

This year's 38 page report features performance evaluations of hundreds of varieties of the 16 crops currently in comparative trials at experiment station locations. It contains the most up-to-date information available anywhere for these crops.

Hundreds of varieties of various crops are grown by experiment station scientists, who evaluate characteristics of yield, resistance to lodging and pathogens, and relative maturity.

University agronomists grow the test crops at various combinations of 13 sites across Minnesota. Those sites include seven experiment station facilities, and fields of cooperating farmers and other agencies that together, cover the range of Minnesota conditions, from Roseau in the north to Fairmont in the south.

Varietal Trials of Selected Farm Crops is available for $2 through most county extension offices. Copies may also be purchased directly by mail from the MES Distribution Center, University of Minnesota, 20 Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108-6064 (Minnesota residents add $.13 sales tax per copy ordered). Request publication AD-MR-5615-E. Make checkspayable to the University of Minnesota.

***CULTURAL AND CHEMICAL WEED CONTROL IN FIELD CROPS* 1993 PUBLICATION AVAILABLE**—Not for use after December 31, 1993. This publication provides up-to-date information to producers and their advisors on many different field crops and includes most recent herbicide data. It will help you make informed weed control decisions in a safe, cost effective manner. For crop advisors, consultants, co-op agronomists, and crop producers. Price is $2.00.

Copies may be purchased directly by mail from the MES Distribution Center, University of Minnesota, 20 Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108-6064 (Minnesota residents add $.13 sales tax per copy ordered). Request publication AG-BU-3157. Make checks payable to the University of Minnesota.

HARD RED SPRING WHEAT AND SPRING BARLEY PRODUCTION GUIDE NOW AVAILABLE—This publication provides tools for making decisions to ensure good production and profitability for wheat and barley growers. It includes fertilizing, estimating yields, tillage, weed, disease, and insect control, and other vital aspects of growing these crops successfully this year. It also provides a handy reference for the field as a pocket guide. For wheat and barley growers in Minnesota. Revised 12-92 Price is $2.00.

Copies may be purchased directly by mail from the MES Distribution Center, University of Minnesota, 20 Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108-6064 (Minnesota residents add $.13 sales tax per copy ordered). Request publication AG-MI-5868. Make checks payable to the University of Minnesota.

Leland Hardman
Extension Agronomist

DIAL U

County Agents: Please Alert Master Gardeners of the Following Items

Insect highlights of 1992—The most common insect questions received by Dial-U in 1992 were as follows: 1) carpenter ants, 2) wasps, 3) household ants (excluding carpenter ants), 4) houseplant insects (e.g. spider mites and scales), 5) pantry insects (e.g. Indianmeal moths and flour beetles), 6) household flies (e.g. fruit flies and cluster flies), 7) cockroaches, 8) ticks, 9) insect galls, and 10) aphids (trees and shrubs).

The number of inquiries about household insects was normal but the number of questions about insects in the landscape and garden was below average. This is partly explained by the cool summer weather we experienced which helped keep insect numbers down. This wasn't true in all cases as the cool weather actually allowed some insects to increase their numbers, e.g. some aphids.

Christmas tree insects—We received a few calls about insects that were associated with Christmas trees. The insects were described as small, dark-colored and fly-like. The couple samples we received turned out to be winged aphids. Apparently they were overwintering on the evergreens, and the warm temperatures woke them up. These aphids should be harmless indoors. Although some aphid species do feed on houseplants, these aphids are probably interested only in conifers. The aphids are short-lived inside and should die soon on their own. Removing the Christmas tree will also take care of the problem.

There's little to be done outdoors this time of year, but it is a good time to have oaks, elms, and other large shade trees pruned without fear of leaving them vulnerable to disease problems. It's still early to work on fruit trees, though. Wait till late February or March, so wounds will heal quickly when the trees come out of dormancy. If you prune fruit trees in January or early February there's more chance of desiccation (drying) and die-back at the pruning sites.

Just because there's little gardening or landscape work to be done outside, it doesn't mean you can't be planning (or just dreaming about) next year's garden and improvements to your yard. Seed catalogs are arriving daily, filled with an array of new flower and vegetable varieties along with the tried and true varieties we've enjoyed for years. If you order early, you won't be faced with a last-minute rush, nor will you need to depend strictly on the seed packets you're able to find in your local supermarket or garden center.

Finally, it makes a lot of sense to focus most of your gardening energy on houseplants indoors, this time of year. Be vigilant in your regular inspection for insect pests; many of them thrive in our warm, **DRY**, homes. Increase humidity if you can, and be sure to wash plants regularly. Don't use a feather duster to clean them unless you're absolutely sure they're pest-free. A feather duster will spread insects, mites, and eggs from plant to plant quite efficiently.

Move plants closer to light sources, keeping in mind that icy windows will cause chilling injury to foliage that comes too close. If shorter days and lower light results in slower growth, don't try to force additional growth through the use of plant food. Wait till your houseplants signal they are beginning to grow more actively again before fertilizing....probably in late February or March.

Assess your houseplants with a cold, impartial eye. If there's a plant or two you absolutely must keep for sentimental reasons, fine. Otherwise, get rid of all the little scraggly, unattractive plants you may have collected over the years. Keep only plants that are reasonably healthy, that look good, and that contribute positively to the appearance and ambience of the room in which they grow.

Jeffrey Hahn
Entomology

Deborah Brown
Horticulture

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AGRICULTURE

Department of Plant Pathology
University of Minnesota
495 Borlaug Hall
St Paul MN 55108-6030

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