

Knobby Tuber Production Result Of No Competition Rather Than Irrigation

By WALT JENDRZEJEWSKI
Knobby tuber production is the result of inadequate plant competition rather than of faulty irrigation or of heavy fertility, according to conclusions based on extensive Idaho experiments.

Idaho investigators compared plots irrigated according to best practices with plots on which water was withheld 3 to 4 weeks till plants were appreciably in none of the faulty irrigation experiments was knobby tuber production increased.

The effect of soil fertility was studied by comparing newly plowed alfalfa (phosphated during alfalfa production) with land that had been planted to row or cereal crops for four or five years; heavily manured land with land receiving no manure; and land receiving various commercial fertilizers combinations, rates and dates with land receiving none. As with faulty irrigation, none of the fertility experiments significantly altered the yield of knobby tubers.

Early in these investigations, it was observed that one or two hills at the end of rows, or hills in rows with blank hills on either side, usually produced one to several knobby tubers. This suggested that plant competition might be a factor. This was studied by various methods. Distances between rows were thinned, and stems per hill varying from 1 to 4 or more were studied. In all cases, the yield of knobby tubers was significantly affected. More knobby tubers were produced in widely spaced rows, by hills widely spaced in the row, by poor stands, and by few stemmed hills.

It has been further demonstrated that seedpiece decay caused by Fusarium species indirectly increases the yield of knobby tubers by reducing the stand. In eastern Idaho, potatoes planted the first week of May produce more knobby tubers than the same seed stock planted the first week of June. Hills from early planted stock have fewer stems, and Fusarium seedpiece decay is more serious as soils are generally colder.

Thus far it has been impossible to completely eliminate knobby tubers. There are a number of factors over which the grower has little, if any, control, and these may tend to increase knobby tuber production. Of these factors, soil borne Rhizoctonia is possibly most important. The above seed treatment will destroy nearly all Rhizoctonia on the sets, but is not effective against that in the soil. Soil borne Rhizoctonia may reduce tuber sets by severing stolons, thus forcing all growth into a relatively few tubers. This would be

comparable to the effect of a poor stand.

Planters do not space all seedpieces at a precise distance. Two sets, although dropped successively down the seedpiece shoot, may occasionally rest side by side in the seed furrow due to rolling in the furrow or some mechanical reason. Wide spacings so created would tend to increase knobby tubers. Planters rarely drop 100 per cent stands, and skips of this type would likewise tend to increase knobbyness. Thus, complete elimination of knobby tubers may not be achieved due to these uncontrollable factors.

By using the following practices, growers can reduce knobby tuber production to a minimum (as found for Idaho conditions):

1. Use seedpieces averaging 1½ to 2 ounces in weight. Seedpieces of this size usually produce 2 or more stems.

2. Dip seedpieces after cutting in Semesan Bel to control Fusarium seedpiece decay — plant as soon as possible.

3. For rows 36 inches wide, plant seedpieces 9 to 10 inches apart in highly fertile land, and 10 to 12 inches in less fertile land. Seedpieces planted the first half of May or earlier, should be spaced at 9 to 10 inches.

Roundup—The Mills school summer Roundup health check will be conducted by the school nurse, Mrs. Annis Struthers, on Tuesday, May 6, at 9 a. m. Parents of children who will enter school next fall are urged to take advantage of this opportunity. Further information may be obtained from the school or by calling Mrs. M. F. Shreve, 7020.

Three-Story Fall Proves Slight

NORTH BEND, May 2 (AP) — A fractured nose is all that Marge Pinkerman has to show today for a fall yesterday from a third floor window of the LePage hotel. She lost her balance while hanging clothes outside the window, the clothes line snapped, and she fell, bouncing off a corner of Duffy's cafe on her 30-foot drop.

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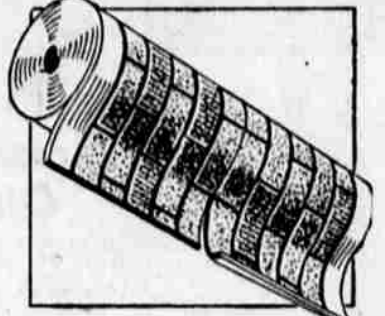
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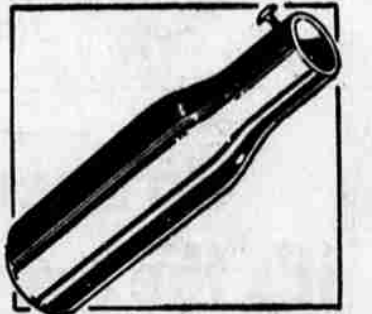
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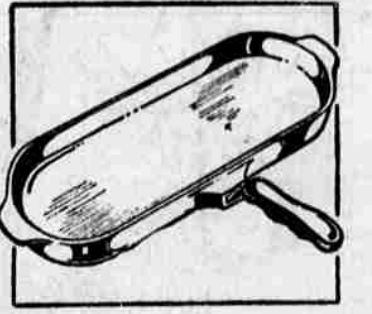
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