



Hayman Heads Up!

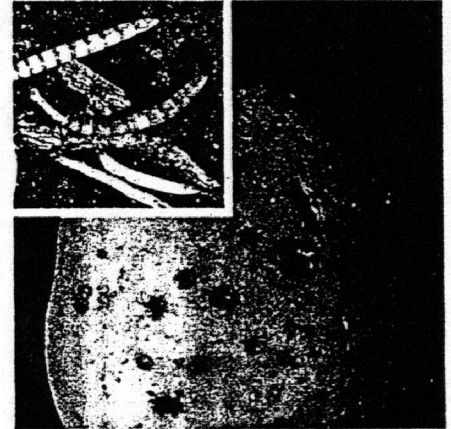
August 1998

INTRODUCING NEW HAYMAN NEWSLETTER

The Nature Conservancy's Virginia Coast Reserve and the Virginia Eastern Shore Corporation are pleased to introduce *Hayman Heads Up!*, a monthly newsletter with tips from experts, special interviews, and other information we hope you will find useful. We are very excited about the opportunity of working with you to grow and market the Hayman potato. The Conservancy's S.A.R.E. grant is helping investigate and evaluate new potential enterprises involving crop diversification and alternative agriculture strategies on the Eastern Shore. We believe the Hayman fits a niche market with reasonable margins. With your ability to grow and the Corporation's ability to market throughout the Mid-Atlantic, together we can produce successful results this year and in future years to come. By utilizing Best Management Practices and developing a sustainable market for a unique item that belongs to the Eastern Shore, we will have taken a step towards protecting the environment of the Shore. We hope you will enjoy this newsletter and will share with us interesting subjects you'd like to see in future issues.

BEATING THE WIREWORM *from conversations with Fred Deim*

How could a worm no more than 5/8 of an inch long be a threat to the quality of your crops? Tobacco wireworms feed on turnips, corn, carrots, beets, peas, and many root crops stunting plant growth and causing plants to grow slowly. Shore growers are familiar with the wireworm and its adult stage as the popular "click beetle", named so because of the sound it makes when turning from its back to its feet. By closely monitoring wireworm populations in the field, farmers can better approximate how much damage is tolerable before it begins to affect their profit margins. Knowing this economic threshold for your crops makes for more efficient use of your resources. Agricultural Extension Agents Fred Deim and Jack Speese monitor wireworm populations using black light traps and issue advisory notices for timely treatments and chemical applications. Fred advises growers that "if you haven't already applied your first spray, now is the time to apply summer foliar spray of Sevin or Thiodan" to your crop to control tobacco wireworm infestations. Farmers are encouraged to contact Fred at (757)414-0731 for Northampton County or Jack at (757)787-1361 for Accomac County to join the mailing list for their bulletins.



Damaged potato. Insert: Wireworms (twice life size).

Photo credit ORTHO Books

"Heads Up" FEATURE: *Haymanculture*

Grown in sandy soil, Haymans are planted in the spring and harvested by hand in October. They are cured for a month in temperatures around eighty-five degrees to turn the starch into sugar. They bruise easily and yields are lower than commercial sweet potatoes. Farmer Pete Davis says he gets "200 bushels an acre of Hayman potatoes compared with 500 bushels of the Jewel sweet potato, the most popular sweet potato variety." The quality of the yield depends on the quality of the soil, seed stock, the season and the farmer. Because Haymans require a longer growing season than other sweets, the trick is to get them in the ground as early as possible. Cuttings tend to sprout earlier and more proficiently than other sweets and are also less susceptible to insect damage. However, wet weather during tuber development causes the potatoes to be long and stringy and prevents harvesting.

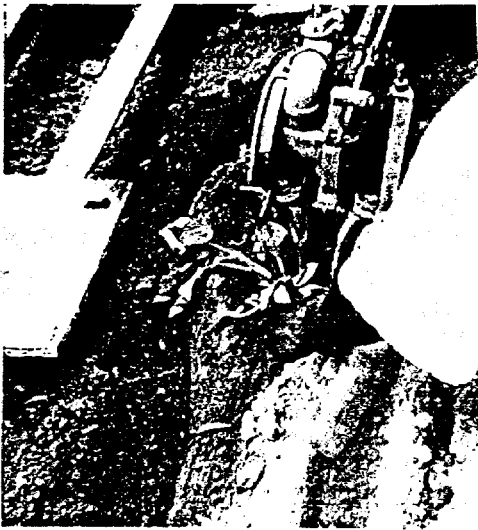


Photo credit Terry Thompson

Boyett Graves, formerly of the Virginia Truck and Ornamental Research Station, is credited with upgrading and distributing improved Hayman stock to farmers. But much is yet to be done. According to authorities at the Agriculture Research Station in Painter, VA, the Hayman's yield potential has reached its genetic limits. As Dr. Rikki Sterrett says, "the inputs and the yield potential are fixed. The returns, or demand side, is the key." Using Best Management Practices for the crop is also recommended.

Some additional practices for successful Hayman production include:

- controlling scurf by spraying Benlate over the seed pieces in the plant bed, and cutting the sprouts above the sand they are planted in (rather than pulling them)
- rotation to a non-tuberous crop to reduce populations of common pathogens
- wireworm control through irrigation during dry periods, and use of Seven or Difolitan if populations high
- chisel plowing to counteract the effects of soil compaction
- practice good seed selection to prevent the breed from becoming "Run down" again

Harvest and Storage practices include:

- reducing skinning by handling as little as possible
- wearing cotton gloves to cushion the potatoes while harvesting and packing
- curing the potatoes at 80-90 degrees and 80% relative humidity
- store the potatoes at 50-60 degrees and 85-90% relative humidity
- sell them by the end of March
- packaging should allow the potatoes to respire or they will rot

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: *The Hayman Stump Hole*

The origin of Hayman potatoes is filled with splendid tales with descriptive adjectives, knights in shining armor, and damn good eatin'. Some say it washed ashore with the Chincoteague ponies when the old ships broke apart in storms. Others say Daniel Hayman, a ship's captain, brought Haymans to the area as part of a shipment of goods from Barbados that sprouted so he gave them to a Methodist minister who planted them. Or maybe it was James Iredell Hayman, the captain of the August Flower or maybe Allen Hayman who introduced the potatoes to this region in the early 1800's. Ode to the families of Hayman. Many claim the name. My favorite story is about the sailors who, trying to sell to people on shore, would shout, "Hey, man, potatoes!" as if this barking would tempt one to buy or bite for that matter!

-by C.L. Robinson, The Nature Conservancy

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