

Hayman Heads Up.

September 1998

THE LIFE OF A HAYMAN, part I *tuber and plant progression photos*

This year, as part of the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) grant, a demonstration plot of haymans is being grown along Seaside Road, north of Nassawadox. Before the first slip was planted, John Hickman and Terry Thompson have begun a photographic study of "the life of a Hayman Potato". Each week, both take photos of the field from pre-set locations. Every two weeks, a sample plant is dug to capture root development. This study will provide both a visual chronology of how the plants develop and serve as a marketing tool as food and specialty writers throughout the Mid-Atlantic become interested in reporting on this unique crop. In the future, we hope this kind of study will provide an easy visual benchmark for how the crop is progressing each year. The project will continue through the harvest and storage season of the crop.

A seed potato with young shoots dug from the sand bed. (Fig. 1) As you can see, hayman seed is very prolific. On a per unit of volume basis, smaller seed potatoes produce more sprouts than larger potatoes. When harvesting haymans this year, Dr. Rikki Sterrett recommends keeping some of the best quality small roots for next year's seed. Select seed for earliness, desirable shape and uniformity.

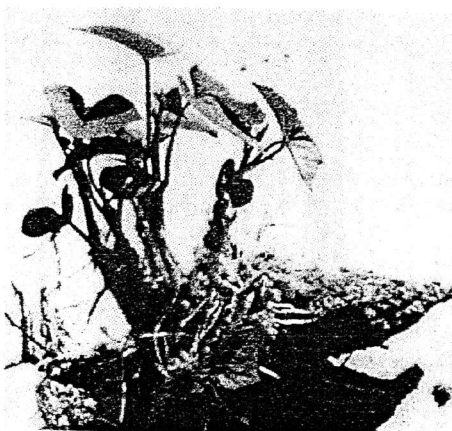


Fig. 1

Try not to save seed roots smaller than 1" in diameter and 2" in length. Slightly larger roots are preferred for ensuring crop quality. A hayman sprout cut from seed potato and ready for planting. (Fig. 2) Tiny roots line the bottom of the stem. It takes 10 to 12 bushels of seed roots to generate sprouts (14,520) needed to plant 1 acre of haymans at 12 inch by 3 foot spacing.

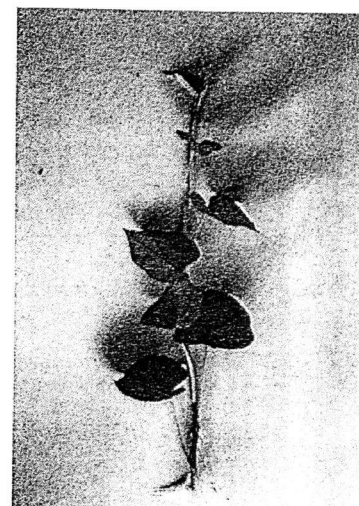


Fig. 2

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT *an introduction*

Integrated Pest Management (a.k.a. IPM) is a five-step approach to pest control. The first step is accurate pest identification and monitoring. Timely identification of the problem helps to determine the proper time to take action. The next step is to evaluate the risk or threat. Determine whether you can live with the pest or if it's a threat to your crop. The third step is to implement physical and/or cultural controls. Planting another variety or species which is disease-resistant or a beneficial companion to your crop are options to consider. The fourth step involves biological controls such as introducing a living parasite or predator, usually an insect or cultured fungus. And lastly, the fifth step entails accurate pesticide application to the target species. This step is a last resort after unsuccessfully attempting the others. Using care in application, reading and following instructions and limiting the application to the pesticide target only, ensure that a healthy environment remains.

"Heads Up" FEATURE: *Beneficial Marigolds*

Marigolds (*Tagetes spp.*) are popular ornamental flowers that most of us are familiar with in small garden settings. But they also have many beneficial properties not thoroughly explored in field crop production. Marigold roots secrete exudates which

control nematode populations in the soil. According to the Herb Specialists at Richters, "Dutch scientists have found nematode infestations can be reduced by over 90% and that the effective range is 90cm/3'." Further "repulsive odor of leaves also serves to discourage above-ground insects." French marigolds (*T. patula*) are compact ornamental plants "preferred for insect control" in the garden. Mexican marigolds (*T. minuta*) are called the "Weedkiller plants". As Richters' specialists point out, "besides its nematodicidal and insecticidal properties, it destroys noxious weeds, including ground elder, bindweed, couch grass and ground ivy." Even better for farmers on the Shore, Mexican marigolds are "also effective mosquito control." This taller variety (up to ~5 feet) is not known for ornamental characteristics and rarely flowers in temperate zones. Richters is a seed, plant and dried herb company located in Ontario Canada.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: *Ye Ole Hayman Lore*

There are many bad puns that need not be written too often when discussing this potato. The Hayman potato that is. While roaming the shore last summer, I had many conversations with folk about Haymans. "What the devil is it?", I asked. Jack White's first comment was "It's a terrible-looking potato." His second comment, "It's damn near like a dessert." I asked Frances Bibbins-Latimer what she thought of the curious morsel. "My dad used to grow Haymans. It's a potato that people think is peculiar to the Shore and I guess it is. My grandmother used to eat a potato called Little Stem Jerseys. I'm just not a sweet potato person." "OK," I said. "It's a start."

Unfortunately, I came to the shore the wrong time of year to taste this curious morsel. But I've received enough opinions to paint a pretty vivid picture for anybody to recognize. "What the devil is it?", I asked. "It's sweet, moist and delicious." "It's texture is smooth and has a mild, delicate flavor." "It's oblong, irregularly shaped, ugly and pale on the inside." It's "a culinary treat with great potential," says Dick Schreiber. "If it's not a white sweet potato, I don't want it," says John Rowe. OK. If I ever desire one, it seems that the only place to get it is here on ye land of Eastern Shore. Worse yet, no more than 50 farmers in recent decades are known to grow Haymans. Farmers like, Ed and Richard Tankard, Burleigh Tatum, Addison and Butch Nottingham, Brooks M. Johnson & Sons of Parksley, M.J. Duer and Company of Exmore, etc. Most others are cultivated by backyard growers for friends, relatives and local stands.

So, I came at the wrong time is all. "And no more questions about Haymans please", they tell me. "I don't know anything else I can tell you", they plead. It's at this point that folk begin to talk about their relatives. "My uncle," says Robert "Bobby" Kilman, "used to dig a hole and kinda, line it with pine straw, put the Haymans in, cover it with more pine straw and then put the dirt back on top. This way, they'll keep from freezing in the winter time you see." Or the topic becomes everybody else. "Most everybody on the Shore eats Haymans," says George Savage. "They're a staple crop here on the Shore."

by C.L.Robinson, The Nature Conservancy

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

Under **Heads Up Feature:** *Haymanculture* August 1998 issue:

- Sweet potatoes, including Haymans are cured for 7 to 10 days at 85°F and 95% relative humidity. Haymans require an additional storage time of 3 weeks or more at 55 °F and 90+% relative humidity for sufficient conversion of starches to sugars for optimum flavor development and softening during cooking.
- Under Boyett Graves, the experiment station was named Virginia Truck & Ornamental. Now it's named the Eastern Shore Agricultural Research & Extension Center.
- Inputs are not necessarily fixed as the amount and type are up to the grower to determine, but the yield potential is fixed as this is genetically determined.
- Spray Captan over seed roots to prevent root rot & cut sprouts above the sand to prevent scurf.

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