

Commercial corn is big business

By Brenda Stewart

A corn roast is a simple, informal get-together, but the commercial growing of corn is not as simple and informal.

The growing of hybrid corn is a

carefully regulated, competitive and complicated business.

Along well-travelled roads in the Castor area there are areas set aside for different varieties of corn. They are marked with signs

advertising the type of corn and the seed company.

According to Hank Stall, a seed salesman in the area, they are "show plots". The seeds are given to the farmers who might be in-

terested in comparing a new variety with those they are already growing.

They are actually being used for "show", planted along roadways where farmers are able to stop and

have a look. They advertise a particular variety and brand of seed.

"We try to get eight to twelve rows across a field," says Mr. Stall, "depending on what the farmer wants to do. We always invite our competitors to put in plots beside ours. There are quite a number of seed companies these days and there seem to be more all the time."

Mr. Stall describes the big commercial "test plot", he grows himself as research for the seed company and he explains the reason for the testing. Any new variety of hybrid corn must be licensed by the Department of Agriculture.

Grant Watson of the Planned Products Division, Department of Agriculture, outlines the procedure. Variety trails are held in which corn requiring the same number of heat units is grouped together. Heat units being a measure of the number of hours of sunlight.

According to the specifications laid out for the trails regarding number of test plots and percentage increase in comparison with the check variety, the variety of corn may or may not be recommended for licencing by the Ontario Corn Committee.

Corn for seeds is grown on a contract basis by farmers in Western Ontario, around Chatham. There are more heat units in that area. Only seeds such as soybean and sunflower are suitable in this area for the same reason. The corn is tested in the field and then again when it is thrashed.

"Even if it has the proper increase, there is no guarantee that it will be acceptable when it is produced. If it is off-color or the germination isn't up to par, it will not pass the tests," says Mr. Stall. Final approval must be given by the Canadian Seed Growers Association.

Cross pollination is also checked by the Department of Agriculture to ensure that the female plants are not shedding pollen. When all the tests have been passed the hybrid seeds are deemed quality seeds and they are sold to farmers.

Fortunately for the home gardener, these stringent rules do not apply. Only commercial hybrid corn is tested in this way. For the amateur vegetable fanatic, corn can still be simple and informal.

Karen Emond rides Winner

Mr. and Mrs. Russell Phair of Russell were both pleased and excited to be present at the Ontario Morgan Horse Show last week and watch their Granddaughter Karen Emond win a championship. Karen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robt. Emond (formerly Dorothea Phair) was riding Mayfield Tralene for the Chestnut Hell Morgan Farm and captured top honors in the English Pleasure Class as well as the High Point Youth award.

The Championship Class required all riders to have placed first or second in previously entered classes. The Youth High Point is the accumulation of the most points from all Youth Saddle and Harness, Youth Showmanship, Youth Equitation and the A.M.H.A. Classes.

Karen who is 16 years of age resides with her parents at Mississauga and the exciting show was staged at Sutton, Ont. Chestnut Hill Morgan Horse Farm is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Jack Reeves where Karen helps train horses at Uxbridge, Ont.

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