



# Wisconsin Farm Technology Days 2007 – Green County

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Heritage Corn Plot Update

A recent visit to the Heritage Corn Plot on the Farm Technology Days grounds shows the predictions made at planting time by Green County UWEX Agricultural Agent Mark Mayer to generally be true, but the results have yielded a few small surprises as well.

When the 25 x 100 foot plot was hand-planted back in May, Mayer said he expected that when show visitors compared early cultivars to today's hybrids, they would see improvements in standability, color and size. He noted that in general, today's plants tend to be sturdier, taller, greener, and more resistant to diseases and insects.

As predicted, the hybrids are resisting disease, whereas the early varieties are showing signs of leaf disease and smut, a fungus which feeds off the corn plant and reduces yield. "I anticipate that by showtime in mid-September the differences will be even more noticeable as the older plants exhibit their lack of disease resistance," said Mayer.

In addition, with no measurable precipitation in the past weeks, a physical comparison of the early varieties to the improved hybrids shows that the corn plants have taken on a completely different appearance. The leaves on the early varieties are curled outward and fully exposed to the sun, whereas in an effort to conserve moisture, the leaves on the hybrid plants are tighter together and more upright.

"Right now is a critical time with the corn pollinating," said Mayer, referring to a lack of water likely to cause a lower yield. During pollination corn uses 1/3 of an inch of water per day.

Although the corn on the heritage plot will not be harvested, Mayer noted that today's hybrids generally yield 5 or 6 times more corn than the early 1900 varieties. The first time Wisconsin's average corn yield reached the 40-bushel per acre mark was in 1940. Among the greatest difference from the early cultivars to today's hybrids is the improvement in yield, currently averaging 150 bushels per acre for the entire state with many fields consistently exceeding 200 bushels per acre.

One would expect that the continuous improvements in genetics and breeding would mean taller plants with each passing decade, but Mayer notes that the heights throughout the years are actually up and down. "I am also surprised to see some of the older plants shooting multiple tassels," he said, explaining that with hybrids the ratio is one tassel to one plant.

Farm Technology Days visitors can visit the Heritage Corn Plot during the show on September 18 – 20, 2007 at Plainview Stock Farm in Albany. The plot, located near the center of Tent City, has rows arranged chronologically with each cultivar marked with a sign noting the name, era, and number of days from planting until maturity.

### IF YOU GO

What: Wisconsin Farm Technology Days

When: September 18 – 20

Where: Plainview Stock Farm, W1202 St. Hwy. 59, Albany

Cost: Admission \$5, kids 12 and under are free

Information: 608.328.9440

Website: [www.greenfarmtech.com](http://www.greenfarmtech.com)

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