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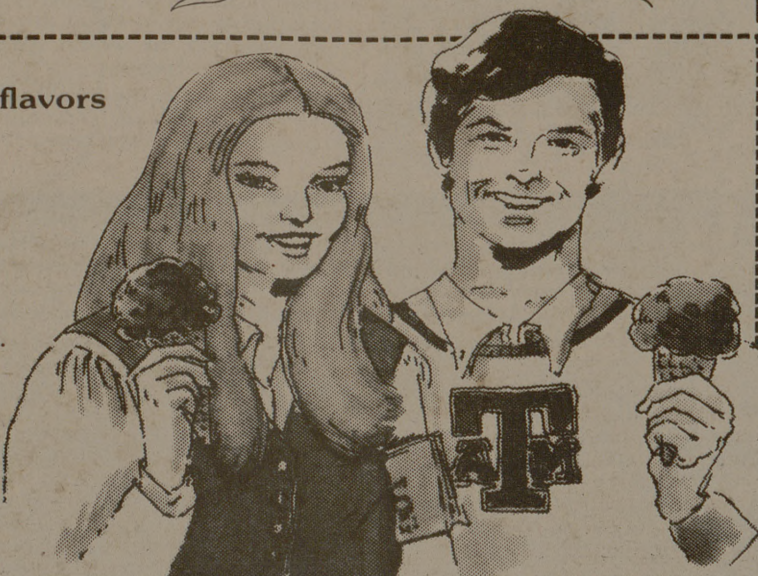
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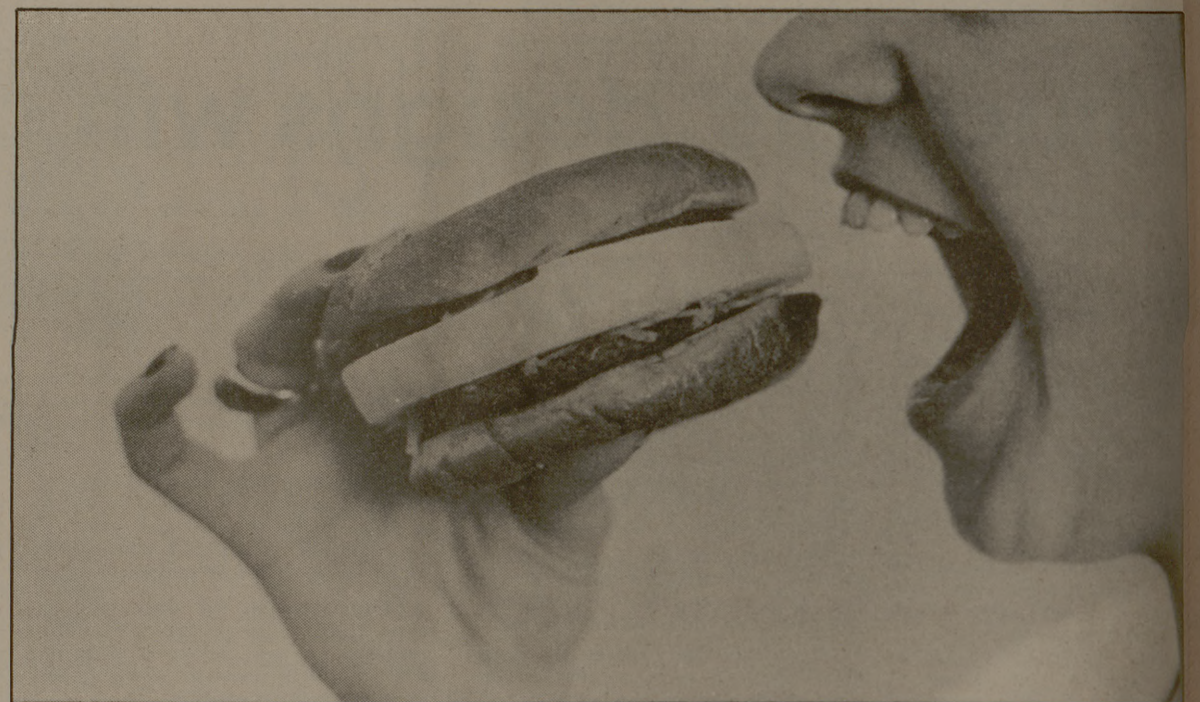


Photo by ANTHONY S. CASPI

Dr. Leonard Pike's giant yellow onions have gained notoriety for their sweet taste

A&M prof develops onions that revolutionize industry

By DONNA HARSHMAN
Reporter

Dr. Leonard Pike, a Texas A&M horticulture professor, has produced four varieties of giant yellow onions that are changing the Texas onion industry.

The four onions have received Plant Variety Protection by the United States Department of Agriculture. This protection is equivalent to a patent.

The onions have gained attention from breeders worldwide because of their higher yields, single centers, longer growing seasons, sweeter taste, longer storage times and greater disease resistance.

"I've had breeders from Brazil, South America, Japan and India express interest in these onions," Pike said.

Pike began developing the onions twelve years ago, keeping several ideas he had for improving onions in mind.

"I wanted to develop onions that would mature over a longer period of time to extend the short growing season," Pike said. "Most

previous onions had the same growing season.

"I also wanted to develop varieties that could be planted progressively. I wanted a series of planting and harvest dates."

The onions are grown over the winter and harvested in April and May in South Texas.

Texas onions currently add more than \$300 million to the state's income. And since Pike's onions have a longer shelf life, spring onions can be exported for the first time, generating greater state revenue.

The onion ring industry is interested in Pike's onions because they have single centers. Because of these single centers, the onions have more complete rings. Thus more onion rings can be produced per onion.

Pike said farmers like the onions because they have shown higher resistance to pink root, an onion disease characterized by a red coloration of the root. And farmers also like the higher yields they get from Pike's onions.

One of the onions, named Texas Grano 1015Y, yields 800-

1,000 bags per acre — 50 percent higher than most other Texas onions. The 1015Y can grow as large as 1 pound if adequately spaced in rows and allowed to mature fully.

While farmers like the high yields, onion connoisseurs appreciate Pike's onions because of their sweet and mild taste. During May, a national onion taste test was held in California. The 1015Y took top honors, being voted the sweetest and mildest tasting onion.

Pike's onions are now grown commercially, with over 4,000 acres in production.

Pike first began studying onions while living in Michigan, and when he came to A&M, he said he was approached by the onion industry with the hope that he could improve Texas varieties.

Pike's yellow onions are the first to be released, and because they have been so successful, he has begun to develop giant red and white onions.

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County's survival checklist ready in case hurricane hits Texas coast

By LISA JANNEY
Reporter

Hurricane season is here, and Brazos County Civil Defense Director Jake Cangelose has the survival checklist in order.

"Preparation is the key to survival during a hurricane because anything can happen," Cangelose said.

Coastal areas receive the most physical damage in hurricanes because of the storm's surge, strong winds and high tides, but heavy rainfall and high winds can extend inland for hundreds of miles, he said.

The first priority in the Bryan-College Station area is finding places to shelter evacuees coming in from the coastal areas, he said.

Cangelose has worked in public safety and civil defense for 25 years. He said the public has always been helpful in times of emergency.

"Once we (the city) establish the main center and the public is informed of its location, people come in volunteering their homes, tools and services," he said.

The Red Cross, churches, public

schools, Radio Amateur people and numerous other groups also volunteer their buildings and services, Cangelose said.

He said the next priority on the list is to prepare public safety facilities and personnel.

"During a hurricane, flash floods, tornados and sustained high winds are all possibilities we need to prepare for," he said.

Cangelose said all emergency and reserve personnel are placed on stand-by status in the event of a hurricane.

The police department makes sure all gas tanks in patrol cars are full, tires in good condition, flashlights in working order and rain gear in ample supply, he said.

"Hospitals are told to make sure emergency generators are ready to go in case of power outages," he said.

Cangelose said the public is asked to make sure garbage cans, bikes, yard decorations and other items that could blow and cause damage are brought inside the home or garage.

It's also a good idea to board up windows to keep damage to a minimum, he said.

Cangelose said when a hurricane is imminent he calls a meeting of local government officials as well as department heads at Texas A&M.

"We all go down a checklist to prepare for any and all threats to come with a hurricane," he said.

A&M's meteorology station equipment is used to track the hurricane and communicate with the National Weather Service in Waco, he said.

Local television and radio stations keep the public informed of the current weather situation, and, if possible, emergency procedures, he said.

Hurricane Carla hit on Sept. 1961, and was the largest hurricane in recorded history to strike Texas. Fortunately, mass evacuations over 250,000 people from coastal areas during Carla resulted in a death toll — 34 people died, according to a Texas A&M College of Geosciences study.

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