

STARTING the Tobacco Crop

Care Of The Bed Is The First Step In Producing A Quality Crop And Future Profits

By a Staff Writer

Editor's Note: Credit for the information in this article is given to Prof. E. J. Kinney of the Kentucky College of Agriculture.

TOBACCO growing begins with the selection of a location for the plant bed. It seems hardly necessary to suggest the selection of good land for the bed—a clearing in the woods or an old fence row. Old sod ground is considered good, maybe the best. The drainage should always be good.

A clearing in the woods provides some protection against cold spring winds. Such soil also is usually supplied with organic matter, rich and mellow. Soil that bakes just won't do. The general practice in Kentucky is to change plant bed sites every year.

Many farmers plow their beds in the fall, particularly if sod ground is used. Manure also is usually applied in the fall. If applied in the spring, it should be well rotted. The bed should be deeply plowed, and the soil disked several times.

Tobacco plants are so small that they cannot stand much competition from weeds. Weeding the bed is a slow and tedious job, and much injury may be done to the tobacco plants if too much of it must be done.

Use of Steam Gains

To help reduce the weeds, tobacco plant beds are burned or steamed. Burning with wood is still universal, although more steam is used every year. In burning, best results are obtained by laying poles on the bed and putting brush and other wood on the poles so as to allow circulation of air at the bottom of the heap. It takes a rather large pile of brush and wood to do the job well.

The bed should be leveled and made ready for seeding before burning, as burning usually kills weed seeds to only a slight depth. Re-stirring the soil, then, would bring weed seed to the top and cancel results obtained from burning.

Steaming of plant beds is increasing as the wood supply diminishes. If a thorough job of steaming is done, it almost completely eliminates the work of weeding. Steaming destroys disease germs as well as weed seed, which is another reason why more of the best tobacco growers use it every year.

Thresher Engines Used

Ordinary steam thresher engines usually are used for furnishing steam. Other equipment includes a shallow wooden or sheet iron pan, and steam hose or iron pipe for conveying the steam from the engine boiler.

The tobacco cloth is placed on the bed immediately after sowing. This keeps the soil from drying and prevents packing by rains. A wire is generally stretched lengthwise through the middle of the bed to hold the cloth off the ground.

A pan that will cover an area of 80 to 100 square feet is usually used; one smaller than 50 square feet is hardly practical. A steam pressure of at least 80 pounds should be maintained for at least 30 minutes. Owners of thresher engines do custom steaming in many communities, and it is often best to employ them to do the work, unless enough tobacco is grown to warrant the expense of owning steaming equipment.

In the burley belt, about 200 square feet of bed is allowed for each acre of tobacco to be set; for dark tobaccos only half this size is needed, since only about half as many plants to the acre are set. The burley plant beds are usually 9 or 12 feet wide and the dark tobacco beds 9 to 24 feet wide. Narrow beds are more convenient for weeding and pulling plants.

Nitrogen Best

Many farmers use fertilizer in the plant bed, even though the soil is fertile. Fertilizers containing a rather high percentage of nitrogen are best, as a 4-8-4 or 6-8-6. While commercial fertilizers are often used in plant beds at the rate of 10 pounds or more per 100 square feet, applications of 3 to 5 pounds are usually ample. The fertilizer should be spread evenly, after the bed is burned or steamed, and raked very lightly into the soil.

Use of nitrate of soda or other soluble nitrogen fertilizer, as a means of stimulating plant growth, is increasing rapidly. It is well to use it when the appearance of the plants indicate its need. A good way to apply it is to dissolve 10 pounds of nitrate of soda or 8 pounds of sulfate of ammonia to a 50-gallon barrel of water, using five gallons of the solution to 200 to 300 square feet of bed. Two light applications, using a sprinkling can, are better than one heavy application. Sprinkling with clear water should follow use of the nitrogen solution, to prevent burning of plants. It is best to remove the tobacco cotton when applying the nitrogen solution.

Cover Seed Lightly

March is the common seeding month. It is a mistake to work the ground and burn the bed when wet, in order to seed early. Sow half a level teaspoonful of seed, cleaned seed per 100 square feet



Steaming of tobacco plant beds increases as the wood supply diminishes. A thorough job of steaming with an ordinary steam thresher completely eliminates the work of weeding. Other equipment needed includes a shallow wooden or sheet iron pan, and steam hose or iron pipe for conveying the steam from the engine boiler.

of plant bed. An ounce of tobacco seed contains about 12 teaspoonfuls, enough to sow 2,000 to 2,400 square feet of bed.

Since it is difficult to sow the fine tobacco seed evenly unless mixed with some other material, it is often stirred into screened wood ashes, air-slaked lime or commercial fertilizers. Slightly moist sand, mixed at the rate of a peck or more for each ounce of seed, does well in windy weather. The best way to get an even stand is to sow the bed several times, using only a portion of the seed each time.

The seed should be covered lightly. The old practice of tramping the bed after sowing, to cover the seed and firm the soil so it will hold moisture, has not been improved upon.

Put on the tobacco cloth immediately after sowing. This keeps the soil from drying and prevents packing by rains. Where the bed is boxed, the cloth may be fastened to the side boards; otherwise it can be pinned down or held with logs. A wire is generally stretched lengthwise through the middle of the bed to hold the cloth off the ground.

Tennessee Pushes Comeback of Saddle Horse Breeding

HORSEMEN from Middle Tennessee towns and rural sections have formed the Middle Tennessee Horse Show Association and are now perfecting a permanent organization.

The association was formed to stimulate interest in horse shows, whether in city, town or community, with the objective of furthering the interests of saddle horse breeding.

For years before the World War, Tennessee walking horses were known favorably in many sections of the country. During the last ten years, more farmers in the pasture areas of Middle Tennessee began turning their attention to breeding saddle horses. Shows, stimulated by the State Fair exhibition at Nashville, are now held not only at practically every county fair, but in scores of small communities. The consequence is that during the winter, suggestions began to be made relative to formation of a horse show association.

Present officers, besides Mr. Woods, follow: Mack Gant, Franklin, vice-president; Murray Hill, Nashville, sec-



Nursery scene in the Blue Grass.

retary; Miss Pauline Landis, Nashville, treasurer.

The executive committee, in charge of permanent organization, includes J. T. Young, Lebanon; John W. Taylor, Eagleville; W. W. Ogilvie, Allisoria; Turnley Rudolph, Springfield; E. Burt Hunter, Lewisburg, and Mrs. A. B. Herron, Brentwood.

County, town, and community horse shows are on the increase in Kentucky and Tennessee.

