March Suggestions *for* Tobacco Growers

By W. W. Green

Superintendent and Supervisor of Tobacco Investigation Caroline County, Virginia.

The successful tobacco planter looks forward to scenes like this in Halifax County, Va.

IT IS my purpose to suggest some timely thoughts for the consideration of the tobacco grower during the early spring months. .

There are many important operations in connection with the crop which should be considered at this time of year, if the most complete success is to be hoped for. Some of these are the selection of the best soil for tobacco, a suitable location for the plant bed, the preparation of the seed bed, the selection of the best variety of seed to produce the type of tobacco desired, and the fertilizer to be used.

Plow In Fall

Tobacco is a crop which requires a considerable outlay, (more than most other crops) both in labor and money. For this reason, the soil which is best adapted to the tobacco plant should be selected for that crop, although the location may cause some inconvenience to the farmer.

Preparation of the tobacco field can be started to advantage the previous fall, or earlier. On the heavy clay soils of Piedmont Virginia where dark-fired, or air-cured tobacco is grown, green cover crops, either legumes, or non-legumes may be seeded to advantage the previous fall and turned under in the spring. These crops should be turned early, before the growth has become too woody to decay readily.

Where no green crop is grown in winter, and where barn-yard manure is to be applied, the writer has had the greatest success by plowing the land in the fall and applying the manure on the rough plowed land through the winter months, replowing in the spring.

Where bright tobacco for smoking purposes is grown in Maryland or Virginia, experiments have indicated, or possibly proven, that a field containing a dry weed growth will produce tobacco of higher quality than any other known preparation. In any case, the field should be plowed early enough in spring to catch some of the spring rains, which should be conserved by periodical discing or harrowing. If this is practiced only light rains will be necessary to make a planting season.

Steam Permanent Beds

A poor crop of tobacco may be grown from good plants, but a good crop is rarely grown from poor plants, so the preparation and care of the plant bed becomes one of the most important features in producing the tobacco crop. If the old custom of growing plants in the woods is practiced, a new site should be selected each year. If weeds, or grass are present, the bed should be burned thoroughly to destroy all foreign seed; if a location can be found in heavily wooded land, where there is no grass or weeds, no burning is necessary, but all shade should be cut within twenty or thirty feet of the bed.

If a permanent bed is to be used it should be thoroughly steamed each year, with a steam boiler and an inverted steam pan made for that purpose. If this steam sterilizing is thoroughly done all diseases and bacteria developing in the bed will be destroyed so the same bed may be used with success year after year.

In either case, old boards from last year's bed should not be used on another bed without sterilizing in some way. Neither should last year's canvas be used unless it is first boiled, or soaked in a solution of 1-1000 corrosive sublimate.

Insect Proof

Six inch boards should be placed on edge around the bed and dirt banked on the outside to stop all cracks underneath. If nails are driven through these boards from the inside, about one-half inch from the top, pointing outward and downward, one foot apart, the canvas can be hooked over the points of these nails quickly and removed and replaced with little or no injury. By so arranging one's bed, it is insect proof. Nothing affords a tobacco grower more peace of mind when the insects begin to crawl than to know his plant bed is safe.

There are many varieties used to produce each type of tobacco. It would be much better if there were not so many. This great array of varieties of course, confuses the grower, as some good farmer will be successful with any one of them. There are many conscientious convictions that each variety is best. This difference of opinion will probably never be overcome, so the only suggestion I would make on this point would be to consult your sales warehouse manager, or buyer who should be acquainted with the variety which brings the best price. Whichever variety you select, use the best seed you can obtain of that variety and see that they have been properly treated with corrosive sublimate.

Fertilizing Important

The question of fertilizing the field is a delicate one. If every field could receive exactly the proper application, probably no two fields would require the same. The character of the soil, state of fertility, previous cropping, color and quality of tobacco desired, all have an important bearing on the fertilizer that should be used, so it is only possible to arrive at a medium by which the grower can adjust his application of fertilizer to suit his conditions.

It is generally conceded that for flue-cured tobacco usually grown on sandy, or light gray soils, which are somewhat deficient in potash, 3-8-5. (In order N. P. K.) fertilizer is about right for the average soil.

For dark-fired and air-cured tobacco grown on clay or heavy gray soil 4-8-5 seems to be about the correct average.

For the Maryland type, grown on light soil and where a high burning quality is desired for smoking tobacco, 4-8-6 is recommended. There are indications, and in many cases, strong evidence that heavier applications of potash may be used with profit. Not more than 2 per cent of the analysis should be from muriate of potash. The remainder should be derived from a form of potash salts which does not contain chlorine. On the sandy soils which may be deficient in magnesia, it would be advisable to use sulphate of potash magnesia to supply the amount above the 2 per cent.

$4,000,000 for Production Credit

THE nineteen production credit associations which made crop and livestock loans to 5,000 Virginia and Maryland farmers last year have held their annual meetings and are planning a substantial increase in business for 1936.

The thirteen associations serving Virginia and the six in Maryland loaned close to $4,000,000 last year for crop and livestock production and for other farm expenses such as the purchase of fertilizers, seed, feed, farm equipment, horses, mules and machinery.

The officers of the association are now busily engaged in taking applications and making loans to farmers for this year's operations. In addition to their headquarters offices, the associations have representatives in almost every county in the two states.

These new sources of farmer-credit which operate under the supervision of the Farm Credit Administration point out that about one-third of the farmer's gross income goes to buy his materials of production, and the associations are putting on a drive to reduce the cost of financing as low as possible in line with the cost of money which comes from private investors through the Federal Intermediate Credit Bank of Baltimore. For the past two years the production credit associations have made loans at five per cent a year.

The production credit associations in Virginia have their headquarters at Warrenton, Strasburg, Waverly, Chatham, Staunton, South Hill, Christianburg, Wytheville, Farmville, Abingdon, and Richmond; and those in Maryland, at Hagerstown, Denton, Salisbury, Frederick, Upper Marlboro and Towson.

Growing tomatoes with the use of production credit in Northumberland County, Va.

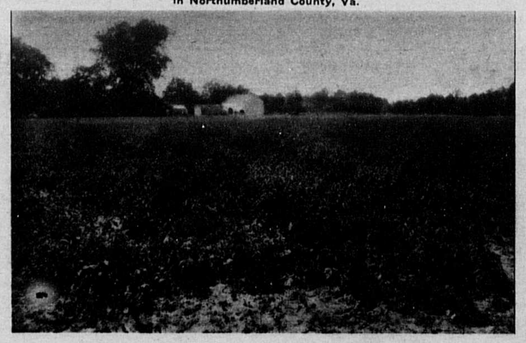

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FIGURE 1

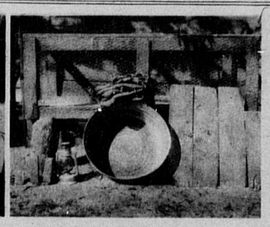

FIGURE 2

Cheap Brooder Planned For Fifty Chicks

Poultry Specialist Advises Inexpensive Home-Made Outfit for Small Number of Chicks

A simple, inexpensive, home-made brooder to care for 25 to 50 chicks with a minimum of trouble and mortality is suggested by P. H. Gooding, extension poultry specialist at Clemson College.

Demonstrations conducted with the home made outfits indicate this is a most successful method of brooding a small number of chicks with little labor in caring for them.

Essential Materials

Materials needed include:

1—A 3x6-foot frame, 2 feet high, built of light material, 1x3 inch planks.

2—Enough one-half inch mesh wire to go around sides and top.

3—A piece of three-fourths inch mesh wire 3x6 feet for the bottom of the cage.

4—An old No. 3 tin tub with a hole in the bottom.

5—A kerosene lantern.

6—Three bricks.

7—Three or four wide boards about two feet long to cover the bottom of the cage just beneath the tub.

8—Enough old crocus bags or old quilts to cover the tub and close up most of the space between the bottom of the tub and floor of the brooding cage.

A 3x6 foot cage is constructed as shown in Figure 1. The bottom is made from three-fourths inch mesh hardware cloth so droppings will fall through easily. Sides and top are made from one-half inch mesh wire. If one-inch mesh wire is used, it will be necessary to put a 1x6 inch board around the bottom of the cage the first few days to prevent the smaller chicks from getting out.

Lantern On Nails

The 1x6 inch planks, shown in Figure 2, are placed in one end of the brooder. Three nails are placed in the center board with one of the nails bent in such a way the lantern can be placed against two of the nails and the third one twisted around to hold the lantern in place. Newspapers placed over the boards keep them clean. These will also help keep the chicks warm and may be removed daily. The three bricks are placed so the tub will rest on them, leaving an opening at the front.

The tub must have a small hole in it to let out fumes from the lantern. Crocus bags tucked around the back, sides and over the top of the tub hold the heat in.

When a good or new lantern is used and the wick trimmed each day, there is no more danger of fire than in using any other type oil brooder. If electricity is available, Gooding suggests a 40-watt bulb instead of a lantern. If weather is extremely cold and the chicks are young, a larger bulb will be necessary.

The brooder may be located in any convenient place protected from wind and rain.

Watch At Start

The brooder should be observed closely the first day or two to see if the chicks are comfortable and to learn how to adjust the lantern and bags around the tub to keep the right temperature. If a sufficient opening is left where the feed hoppers and water fountains are, and the chicks are going in and out, it is apparent the temperature is favorable.

If the chicks hover under the tub and chirp, it is an indication they are cold.

A good practice is to remove the tub about 4 p. m., replace soiled papers with new ones, trim the wick, refill the lantern and replace it.

If a brooder thermometer is available, it would be wise to check the brooder temperature before placing the chicks in it. This can be done by lighting the lantern and placing the thermometer under the edge of the tub about two inches above the floor of the brooder. Enough sacks can then be placed over the tub and around the sides to bring the temperature to 95 to 100 degrees, depending on the age of the chicks and the outside temperature.

Poultry Council Now Functioning

The Northeastern Poultry Producers Council is now functioning in behalf of the producers of poultry. The Council consists of six delegates from each of 13 states. Three delegates from each state are practical poultrymen engaged in some phase of the poultry industry; one delegate represents the regulatory and control officials within the state, such as the Division of Markets in Virginia; one delegate represents the sustaining membership in each state; another represents educational institutions and agencies within each state.

Objectives of the Council are:

1—To co-ordinate and correlate efforts of all poultry producing and producers marketing organizations comprising the northeastern states, to co-operate with the Federal government and the various agencies, institutions and organizations within the respective states as to matters relating to the promotion and protection of the poultry industry of the Northeastern area as a whole.

2—To perfect an organization which can speak with authority and reliability in the interests of the poultry industry in all its phases as it may be developed in this section of the United States.

3—To more effectively represent the Northeastern section of the country in National Poultry Affairs.

4—To develop ways and means of promoting a safe and logical growth of poultry keeping upon a high quality basis of standardization of grades and uniform terminology within the area covered by the council.

5—To enhance the safety of the poultry industry in this group of states for the future.

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