

March Suggestions for Tobacco Growers

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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, reploting 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, Chat-ham, Staunton, South Hill, Christian-burg, Wytheville, Farmville, Abingdon, and Richmond; and those in Maryland, at Hagerstown, Denton, Salisbury, Frederick, Upper Marlboro and Tow-son.

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