Are You Planting Good Seed

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ARE YOU PLANTING GOOD SEED?

Gerald E. Wolfe

Mr. Farmer, do you always know what you are buying when you buy your seed? Many people do not. The seed tag on a bag of seed contains important information. It actually tells you the quality of the seed you buy. The information which should be of concern to the farmer is the kind and variety, percent weed seed and noxious weed seed, percent pure seed, percent inert matter, date of last germination test, percent germination and percent hard seed. All of these factors play a major part in determining seed quality.

First, you should have the assurance that you get the kind and variety of seed you desire. Many varieties of seed look alike. In many cases, it takes an experienced seed analyst to tell the difference between them. If you purchase seed from your neighbor, he may have forgotten or may not know the variety of his seed. He may unintentionally sell you fescue for ryegrass. You should always be positive of the name and variety of seed before you plant.

Second, you should always notice the percent weed seed and noxious weed seed present in the seed. This is one of the most important factors to consider before buying seed, but probably considered least by some farmers. Do you often wonder why you have so many weeds each year after you have tried to carry out a good weed control program during the growing season? It is usually said that your neighbor's weed seeds are blown in or washed in during excessive rains. This

\[1/Mr.~Wolfe\] is the latest recipient of the recently initiated Noble Pace Award. This award, established by the Mississippi Seedsmen's Association in honor of Noble Pace, past president of the Southern and Mississippi Seedsmen's Associations, is given each year to the Seed Technology student submitting the best essay on a subject of interest to seedsmen.

Mr. Pace, while a member of the Mississippi Seedsmen's Association, was a prime factor in the establishment and support of the Seed Technology Laboratory. Mississippi State University is proud to recognize and cooperate with the Mississippi Seedsmen's Association in the selection of Mr. Wolfe for this award.
may be partly true, but you also may be planting many of them. Many of our weed problems could be controlled by planting seed which contain a minimum number of weed seeds and especially noxious weed seeds. Noxious weeds are those considered by law as extremely hard to eradicate. Some fields have been so contaminated with noxious weeds, especially wild onions, that production of small grains and forage grasses have been eliminated.

Some farmers believe that cleaning home-grown seed is not important. If you can remove weed seed, I believe that it is important. Great economic losses result each year because of weeds. Weeds offer competition with the plants for moisture, nutrients, and sunlight. The degree of competition depends upon the type and number of weeds. If a few more precautions were taken in selecting planting seed, the financial gain would be surprising.

Third, the percent pure seed should always be considered. Have you ever planted oats and have a stand of oats and vetch? The analysis tag may tell you why. If two crops are planted together, you will not only have problems during the growing season, but at harvest time as well.

Fourth, you should notice the percent inert matter in the seed. Inert matter is anything in the bag that is not seed. This includes dirt, insects, broken seed, etc. Inert materials will not make a crop but they have weight. If you are buying expensive seed by the pound, I am sure that you want a full pound of seed. Inert matter is most prevalent in combine run seed.

Fifth, the date of the last germination test should be considered before buying seed. A seedsman is required by law to have a germination test taken and the label must tell the month and the year in which the germination test was completed. No more than 5 months may elapse between the last day of the month in which the test was completed and the date of transportation or delivery in interstate commerce. These tests are for the protection of the seedsman and the seed purchaser by insuring high-germinating seeds.
Finally, probably the most important factor to consider before buying or planting your seed is the percent germination and percent hard seed. All seeds that look good may not necessarily be viable because of mechanical injury, injury during storage, or insect damage. Hundreds of dollars are lost each year by farmers who plant low germinating seeds. The main reason is that losses from poor seeds are not obvious since you can not watch them germinating. Usually, a poor stand is blamed on the weather, insects, or disease. This may be partly true, but not always.

Today, and more so in the future, complete mechanization in farming is necessary to reduce the cost of production. To stay in business, and farming today is becoming a very complex business; we must reduce our expenses. This is a challenge not only to you, but the seedsman as well. Your seedsman is meeting this challenge by developing high germinating seeds that will give you a stand when you plant to a stand. What better way is there to economize than to plant seeds of high germinative ability which will produce healthy vigorous seedlings with one planting?

Does your home-grown seed germinate well? They should germinate around 90 percent in some crops. The best way to find out about your seed is to send them to a seed lab for a purity test. The few minutes spent can mean money in your pocketbook.

Do you notice tall or irregular plants in your field, or some off-colored seeds? If you do, it is time to buy new seed. It is best to start with new seed every two years unless you take special precautions to prevent seed mixtures, weed seed contamination, and low germinations.

I have tried to point out steps that should be considered before you plant in order to get a good stand of vigorous seedlings at the lowest cost. Even though you might know the latest methods of weed control, apply the exact amount and kind of fertilizer, what does it avail if you do not get a stand? Always remember the Biblical phrase, "Whatever a man sows, that also will he reap."