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Plant Beds

Jones H. Smiley
University of Kentucky

Ira E. Massie
University of Kentucky

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PLANT BEDS

Due to the occurrence of blue mold and manganese toxicity in some of the plant beds this last spring, it is probably advisable for all growers to select a new site for the 1964 crop.

Blue mold is a fungus disease which sometimes causes severe damage to tobacco seedlings just prior to setting time. The fungus will produce heavy-walled spores on the dying or dead leaves. These spores are capable of remaining in the soil at least a year and attacking the next crop of plants if the same site is used again for tobacco plants.

Where the same site is used for a tobacco bed year after year, especially on soils low in organic matter and with poor soil structure, there will often be areas in the bed with few or no plants. This could be due to soil compaction, excess fertilizer salts or manganese toxicity which occurs when an excess of manganese is available to the young tobacco seedlings. Manganese will build up in a continuous plant bed, particularly in heavily burned or steamed beds.

The location of the plant bed is very important. It should be in a fertile soil, free from shade, preferably with a southern or eastern exposure. It is also desirable to have a plant bed in an open area free from weeds and where it will get plenty of sunshine. If at all possible, avoid placing a plant bed near tobacco barns or other sources of tobacco trash, and areas where bull nettles or wild groundcherries grow. Tobacco trash and weeds carry diseases which affect tobacco. An ideal place for

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growing plants is in an open field near a water supply and close to the tobacco field so there will be plenty of water available in case the bed needs watering and freshly pulled plants will be available for setting.

As soon as time permits after tobacco harvest in late August or early September, the land should be plowed so that the fibrous material growing in this area will have time to decompose before winter. Begin plowing in the middle of the bed and throw furrows on each side toward the middle until breaking is completed. This will make the bed higher than the surrounding ground, and the furrow left on each side will help keep outside water from flowing over the bed. After the bed has been plowed, it should be worked in relation to the treatment.

J. H. Smiley
Ira E. Massie