

Fertilizing float tobacco plants

By Tom Mills

County Extension Agent for Agriculture/Natural Resources

Growing tobacco transplants by the Float Production method has developed many questions on how to fertilize growing plants. Since both vary in water depth, and plants use fertilizer from the water at varying rates, a cookbook recommendation will not work.

Farmers are using a device called the DIST 4 meter to measure fertilizer levels. The DIST 4 meter is a device which measures the electric current which will travel through water. As larger amounts of fertilizer are added to water, the higher the DIST 4 meter will read.

To assist farmers in making a more accurate estimate, U.K. Extension specialists have developed a calibrated chart. Using known amounts of 20-10-20 fertilizer in water, DIST 4 readings are charted for different parts per million nitrogen.

Research results have shown that tobacco transplants grow best at 100 to 150 parts per million Nitrogen. Rates greater than 150 ppm can lead to more disease, problems, and destruction of plants.

To measure float bed fertilizer levels with a DIST 4 meter, a reading is first taken from the water source that was used to fill bed. Generally, city water will read 3 and some wells or springs may read higher. The

initial DIST 4 water reading is subtracted from the water bed reading. For instance, a 3 reading from water source subtracted from a float bed reading of 9 would equal a 100 ppm nitrogen. Generally speaking, for each difference of 3 the nitrogen level increases by 50 ppm. Keeping the nitrogen level equal throughout the bed is important. When adding fertilizer, care must be taken to distribute fertilizer and not allow this to settle in one corner. A hose leading to the other end will circulate the water best. However, the next best method would be to dissolve the fertilizer then add the solution to different areas then mix by adding water to these areas.

Caution should be used in purchasing fertilizer. First, the calibration charts are for 20-10-20. Second, DO NOT purchase fertilizer that contains Urea. Ask the fertilizer dealer to show you there is not Urea in their fertilizer. Urea has been shown to develop ammonia gas which will settle on top of trays and kill young plants.

If you have questions on float plant production or would like to borrow the Extension Office vacuum sealer (200 count or 240 count trays), call 256-2403.

Library News

Recently, we received some very positive response to our programming at the Rockcastle County Public Library from some faithful patrons and we would like to share this with the public.

To all the employees of the library, Sam, MacKenzie and I want to express our thanks to each of you for the time and effort you put into making the preschool program such a success! The presentation "Hi Car" by the Rockcastle County Middle School 8th Grade Touring Theatre and adults present seemed to tick so too. It is so motivating for the younger children to have the older ones performing for them. Thanks again for

all you do for the library.
Tincy Payne

Library Staff and Workers

I just wanted to send a note telling you how much I enjoyed Tuesday's presentation of "Hi Car" by the Rockcastle Middle School's 8th grade touring theatre. I think it is wonderful that our school system and public library can work together in such a way, and was equally impressed with how you received the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation grant!

I'm so proud that our library is growing and providing such a valuable educational opportunity for our community.

Congrats on a very successful day! My son and I truly enjoyed it.
Jamie Cornelius

Yards to Paradise

By: Max Phelps

Guidelines for Successful Pruning

Pruning is a confusing subject to the average homeowner. There often is not a simple yes or no to questions on this subject. Sometimes once a year, sometimes multiple prunings are best. Where should I cut, how high should I let the plant get before whacking it back? And on and on it goes.

My aim is not to exhaust the subject in this one article, but to give some useful seasonal tips to help you trim up plants that may be in need of such correction in a timely manner.

Most evergreens, particularly hollies; boxwoods, laurels, nandinas, ligustrum, pines and spruces generally accept pruning best in late winter, doing so at other seasons is not necessarily a mistake. Deciduous trees and shrubs can generally be pruned anytime when dormant, but it should not be done before freezing when this occurs. (Some dieback may occur if pruning happens early in the winter, but this has to be balanced with the potential for winter damage. "Bleed" pretty badly if one waits until budbreak in early spring.)

There are three general types of pruning: tip pruning, thinning and shearing. Let's look at each. Probably a combination of these methods will be in order.

Shearing creates an even surface across the top and sides of the plants - generally hedges or formal specimens. Small leaved Japanese hollies, taxus and boxwoods are common plants on which this type pruning is practiced. Spirea, hellebore, privet, burning bush and Forsythia sometimes can be pruned this way if one has patience.

March 16-22 designated Poison Prevention Week

Poison Prevention Week is a congressional designated time to underscore the importance of protecting children against accidental poisoning. 2003 marks the 42nd observance of Poison Prevention Week which takes place this year March 16-22.

In 1970, The Poison Prevention Packaging Act was passed. This landmark legislation sought to protect small children by requiring that dangerous household substances be sold in child resistant containers. Since passage of this act, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that the lives of 700 children have been saved.

Local Angus Breeder recognized

Lonnie Gene Cash, Broadhead, has been recognized nationally by the American Angus Association for having two registered Angus cows included in the Association's 2003 Pathfinder Report.

Only 1,971 of the more than 15,000 American Angus Association members are represented in this year's report, according to John Crouch, executive vice president of the Association with headquarters in St. Joseph, Missouri.

The Pathfinder Program identifies superior Angus cows based on recorded performance traits that are economically important to efficient beef production. The traits include early and regular calving and heavy

Slips the sides some, with the bottom of plants wider than at the top. This allows light to the bottom limbs. Easy dead limbs near the bottom and thicker, healthier hedges will be the result if you follow this practice.

Tip pruning encourages side growth on leggy plants and a fuller look overall. Look for limbs that are long with leaves only at the tips and no side growth - give these some whacking back. The lengths of the cuts should not be all the same, as in the above shearing, but only the limbs that need encouragement to branch out and thicken up.

Tip pruning works at any time of the year. It probably should be hard in winter. Tip pruning will usually stunt a plant if done during the spring and summer. (This can be a good thing sometimes, making a plant more stocky and less lanky or brittle.) Tip pruning can encourage blooming the following year if performed shortly following current season blooming.

Thinning is another way to prune. It lightens up a dense, thick shrub. It can also rejuvenate an older shrub by forcing major regrowth, including new growth on the insides of a large bush.

Thinning can be slow and tedious, with branches being lopped off one at a time.

This plants such as blackberries, wisteria, Forsythia, dogwoods, fruiting trees and viburnum.

A few plants not to prune until after they bloom include: azaleas, rhododendrons, pines, Forsythia, quince, mock orange, large leaved hydrangeas, broom and spirea.

The author is a freelance writer and landscaper. E-mail: max@rockcastle.com with suggestions and comments.

Smoke Detectors Ensure Family Safety

By: Hazel Jackson
County Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences

Congratulate yourself if you already have smoke detectors in your home. Because these units save lives. Nearly 60 percent of fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke detectors.

Give yourself a big pat on the back if you routinely check smoke detectors to be sure they are working. About 30 percent of homes with these units have at least one detector that doesn't work. This creates a false sense of security because you believe your family is protected when it really isn't. For a home to be fully protected, you should install a smoke detector outside each bedroom area and on every level including the basement.

Following some simple steps will ensure your detectors are in good working order.

Test each smoke detector at least once a month by pushing the test button and listening for the alarm. You might need to use a broom handle to reach the test button. Follow the manufacturers instructions about keeping smoke detectors clean. You often can remove dust and spider webs with a vacuum cleaner attachment. If you are working or painting near a detector, temporarily cover it as protection from dust or paint.

If your smoke detectors are battery operated, change the batteries regularly. Be sure to check the best use by date on a battery before installing it. Some people put in new batteries at the same time they reset clocks in the fall and spring. For longer battery life, use nine volt lithium batteries that should last up to six years.

When used with an Underwriters Laboratory approved smoke detector, approved smoke alarms, consider replacing it with a new detector. This should reduce

the number of nuisance alarms. When moving into a new home, immediately replace batteries in each smoke detector. If a smoke detector is more than 10 years old, replace it right away. Some models cost as little as ten dollars. That's a

small price to pay for the safety of your family.

Along with working smoke detectors, every home should have a fire escape or exit plan to follow if the smoke detector alarm goes off. Be sure this plan has a normal exit route and an alternate emergency escape route in case the first one is blocked.

Remind family members that escape routes might be filled with smoke, making it necessary to crawl under the smoke to reach the nearest safe exit from the home.

Along with an escape plan, arrange for a safe meeting place outside where everyone can meet to ensure that all escaped safely. And remember never to re-enter a burning building.

For more information, contact the Rockcastle County Cooperative Extension Service.

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Dr. Gina Land will be opening a new office in Berea



Gina Land, M.D.

Dr. Gina Land, a native of Madison County, will be seeing patients in the Specialty Clinic at Berea Hospital, beginning Tuesday, March 18. Appointments will be available the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of every month.

Dr. Land is a Board Certified Obstetrician & Gynecologist currently practicing at Richmond Women's Health Care, LLC. She is now scheduling appointments at Berea Hospital for your convenience.

Please call (859) 625-9450 to schedule your appointment.



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