



THIS VIEW OF THE FIELD-READY TOBACCO PLANTS on the Ben F. Martin farm shows the plastic cover in the background that helped him get his seed in early and the plants off to a fast start. The variety Martin used exclusively this year was Pennbel-69 which was locally-developed at the PSU Southeastern Research Laboratory. L. F. Photo

● **Early Tobacco**

(Continued from Page 1) sene to gas for heat.

Martin bent the pipes to span a six-foot wide bed, at a center height of eighteen inches, and spaced the pipes four feet apart. The pipes were about 8½ feet long, but he felt a stronger structure could be made with 10-foot pipe so it could be anchored deeper into the ground. This extra anchoring may be an important factor in resistance to wind damage. It has been reported that several farmers had tried the plastic-covered tobacco beds this year and some of these were not able to withstand the freak gale that swept through the county early in April.

Martin planted his bed March 16, and was no sooner finished than he had a 5-inch snow covering on it. He found that load of snow put enough moisture into the ground that he didn't need to water the bed for the first

four or five weeks. The plastic cover of course stopped the moisture from escaping, and also held the temperature at an ideal level. He used no fertilizer on the bed.

Ventilation is one of the critical problems with this method of growing plants. If the grower doesn't ventilate soon enough temperatures may get so high under the plastic cover that scalding may occur near the center of the bed on a bright day. If ventilated too soon, temperatures may be lowered to a point where the advantage of plastic over muslin or glass may be lost.

At the Martin farm ventilation was begun by opening the cover at the ends about mid-April. Then a few days before the first of May six to eight-inch slits were cut at four-foot intervals near the ridge. About one week before transplanting, the plastic cover was taken off completely.

Several days after the plants were moved to the field, Martin began to notice some cut-worm damage. He sprayed his 5,000 plants with Toxaphene, and replanted where some plants were killed.

What are some of the problems with this method of growing plants? According to Martin's experience this year he would recommend using longer pipe for his bows, and would use 9 foot plastic instead of 8 foot for a 6-foot bed to allow more material to be anchored at the edges. He hopes to find a better way of sprinkling his plants under the cover. He seemed satisfied with his results, and will probably use this method again next year.

Henry Engle offered some general recommendations to any growers interested in trying the plastic-cover method for starting their tobacco plants.

1 — Use 10-foot sections of ¾-inch galvanized pipe for a 6-foot bed so that the center of the bow will be about two feet above the plants. He feels this greater height under the plastic will help keep temperatures down, and will provide more spread for the water pattern.

2 — Preplant spraying with Chlordane to prevent cutworm damage.

**Avoid "Substitute" Pesticides On Forage Crops, Bull Cautions**

Pennsylvania farmers, particularly dairy farmers, were cautioned against the use of "substitute" pesticides for spraying forage crops recently.

State Agriculture Secretary Leland H. Bull said dairymen should be "absolutely certain that their hay fields are sprayed only with approved materials at recommended rates of application." If in doubt about either the product or the amount that should be applied, he said, farmers should consult their county agent before spraying.

Secretary Bull pointed out that the Agriculture Department is engaged in an extensive research project in conjunction with the Pennsylvania State University, constantly testing milk for traces of pesticide residues.

"The purpose of this program is two-fold," he explained. "First to safeguard our milk supplies and assure consumers a safe wholesome (Continued on Page 10)



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