

Coal Waste Seen Useful In Greenhouse Operations

Burned anthracite coal waste from mine spoil banks is a plentiful and inexpensive substitute for the tons of topsoil used annually by greenhouse operators in the Northeastern states, says Dr. John W. White, associate professor of floriculture at The Pennsylvania State University.

From experiments at Penn State, Dr. White found that such coal mine wastes are as effective as soil in growing greenhouse plants—and less costly. Inert and sterile as a growth medium, incinerated anthracite enables greenhouse operators to completely control plant growth while using specific fertilizer solutions.

Dr. White and associates estimate that over 900 million tons of anthracite mine refuse exist in piles or banks in northeastern Pennsylvania. Fires in these coal banks have produced vast quantities of incinerated mine wastes. For the northeastern states at least, this useful greenhouse material is often lower in cost than soil, Dr. White affirms.

The material has been used successfully with peat moss and essential fertilizer in growing

carnations, roses, azaleas, African violets, and many other potted plants. It can be prepared by crushing and double screening the refuse for about 50 cents per ton. This does not include price per ton and delivery cost.

Prices of current soilless media range from 4 to 7 dollars per ton, plus delivery costs. Truck shipping would cost about 25 cents for the first mile to cover loading and unloading, and 5 to 8 cents for each additional mile.

Such prices could make incinerated anthracite a "best buy" for greenhouse operators even in New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, Dr. White points out. Shipping could be handled by trucks in bulk loads of 5 to 20 tons, with delivery in one day.

The study was made with the cooperation of Dr. H. Beecher Charmbury, Assistant Dean for Planning and Development, College of Earth and Mineral Sciences. Dr. White and associates are affiliated with the Agricultural Experiment Station, College of Agriculture.

Inexpensive and readily available growth media for potted plants are critically needed by greenhouse operators,

Dr. White claims. About 6000 acres are covered by greenhouses in the country. Growers of potted plants use around 2 million tons of topsoil or a suitable substitute in producing container-grown plants.

Some samples of burned anthracite were found to contain appreciable quantities of sulfates. Such materials required extensive leaching before plants could grow.

Happy Homemaking

By BARBARA BAKER

A handy gadget around the home is a homemade "height hook." Use a wooden handle from an old broom or mop and insert a two-inch nail in the end. Bend the nail to form a hook. It may be used to remove things from high shelves, lift curtain rods and take pictures off the wall.

Kitty odor can be removed with a solution of half white vinegar and half warm water. Apply to spot, let stand for five minutes, then blot up with paper toweling.

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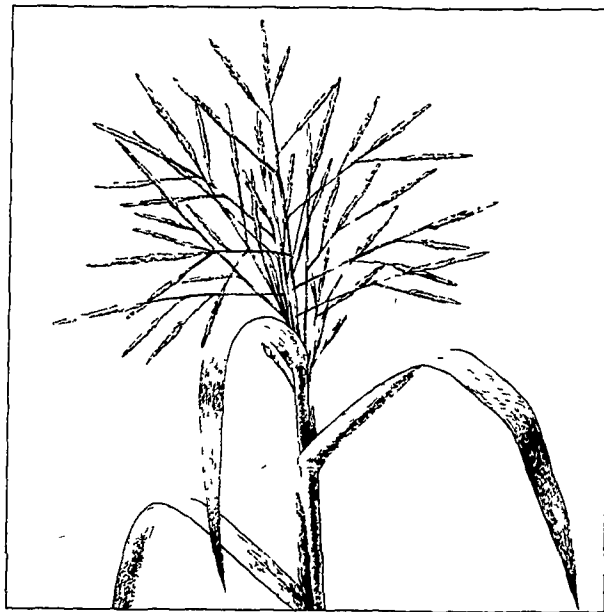
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