

# Blue mold alert sounded at Maryland field day

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Good news and bad news shared the podium on the afternoon program during the University of Maryland's thirty-fourth annual tobacco field day July 25. The event was held at the university's tobacco research farm near Upper Marlboro, operated by the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station.

On the bad news side, Dr. Arvydas P. Grybauskas, an Extension plant pathologist in the botany department of the University of Maryland, announced that six confirmed cases

of blue mold disease have been found during recent days in southern Maryland tobacco fields.

The mold spores appear to have been wind-carried from Mexico by way of the Carolinas. The fungal disease has appeared in four of the five southern Maryland tobacco-growing counties. Anne Arundel county is the lone exception so far.

Blue mold outbreaks generally are brought on by too much cool, damp weather during the tobacco-growing season. The malady has been a problem in plant beds for some time. But it was first observed actively infesting Maryland

tobacco fields in 1979.

Dr. Grybauskas urged tobacco farmers to inspect their fields thoroughly for evidence of blue mold.

Because of depressed prices during the tobacco market auction season this spring, many farmers have not treated their fields with metalaxyl, a soil-incorporated systemic fungicide. So the potential exists for blue mold infestation to reach epidemic proportions this year in southern Maryland, as it did in 1980 and 1981.

Grybauskas mentioned four

possibilities for helping to keep the blue mold disease in check:

— Tobacco plants nearing maturity could be harvested earlier than usual. The curing process kills the blue mold fungus.

— If you use metalaxyl in a pre-plant application, you can incorporate additional systemic fungicide now into the soil. Keep in mind, however, that early-season application plus current application should not exceed two quarts per acre.

— If you didn't use the systemic fungicide earlier, spray your tobacco plants now with a

protectant, non-systemic fungicide to provide a chemical barrier which will prevent further infestation of blue mold. Generic names for such fungicides include mancozeb, maneb plus zinc, and zineb.

— Hope for hot weather, with both day and night temperatures above 80 degrees F. Low humidity also helps to hold blue mold spore formation in check.

Highlighting the good news at last week's tobacco field day was presentation of a \$13,800 check to agricultural administrators at the University of Maryland by a representative of the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company of Winston-Salem, N.C. The money will be used for tobacco production research.

Since 1977, Reynolds contributions to the University of Maryland's tobacco research and education programs have totaled \$120,125. The company's contributions to all U.S. Land-Grant universities since 1962 for similar purposes have exceeded \$5.5 million.

Also on the good news ledger were portions of a report by Dr. W. Lamar Harris, director of the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station, headquartered on the University of Maryland campus at College Park.

Dr. Harris informed the group that a new headquarters building under construction at the tobacco farm should be ready for occupancy by late fall. The building will provide office and laboratory space for the experiment station's Southern Maryland Research and Education Facility. Ground-breaking ceremonies were held last March.

Dr. Claude G. McKee, tobacco farm superintendent, reported that attendance at this year's field day was about 400 persons — down slightly from previous years. A depressed tobacco economy was seen as a major reason for the attendance dip on what otherwise was a beautiful day for an outdoor event of this kind.

A Canadian military blimp circling over nearby Andrews Air Force Base added interest to the morning tours.

Two of the six stops on the morning wagon tour of research plots paid tribute to work done in earlier years by Paul N. Winn, Jr., a former agricultural engineering research worker at the University of Maryland, who retired on May 31. Winn and his wife were present at this year's field day.

The tour stops which reviewed Winn's earlier work involved harvest mechanization and "Principles of Curing Maryland Tobacco."

At other tour stops, University of Maryland agricultural research workers presented up-to-date information on sucker control chemicals, herbicides for grass control in tobacco fields, sludge, and tobacco variety development.

Regarding sewage sludge, the word still is "don't use it on fields where tobacco will be grown," admonished Dr. Charles L. Mulchi, associate professor of agronomy at the University of Maryland.

Dr. Mulchi cited research at the University of Maryland's plant research, farm near Calverton (Montgomery county). This research showed that heavy metals from sludge application were still present in the soil — after 10 years — in sufficient quantity to cause a negative quality impact on tobacco that was planted in 1983.



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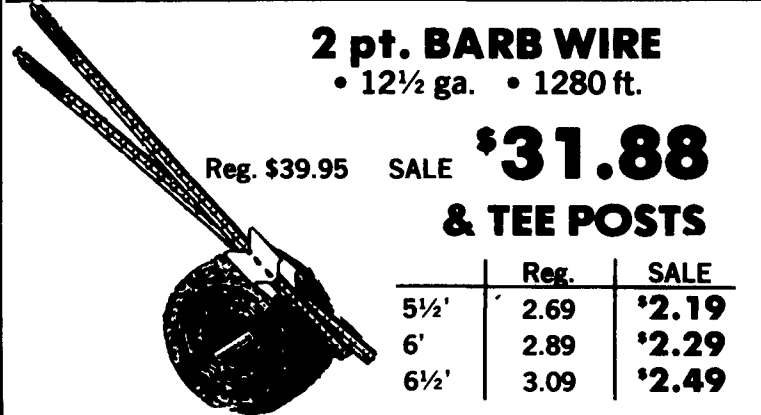
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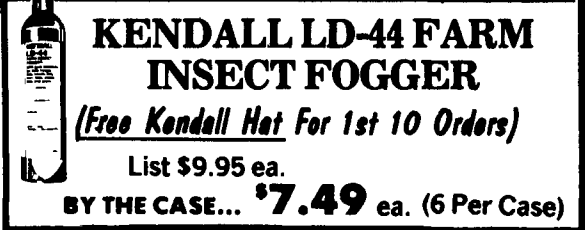
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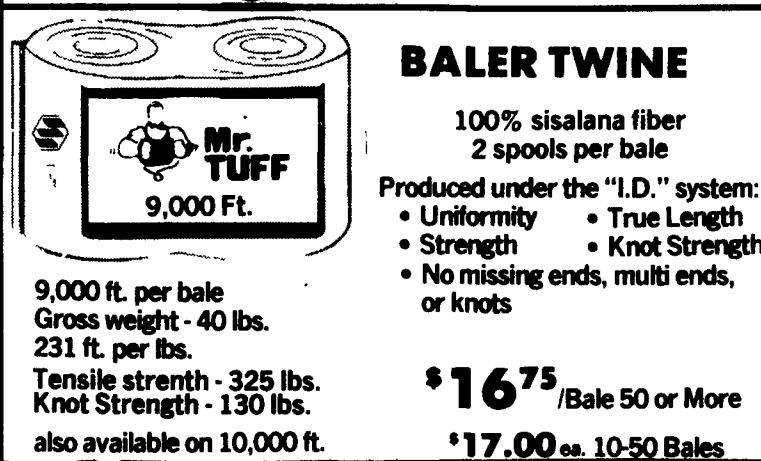
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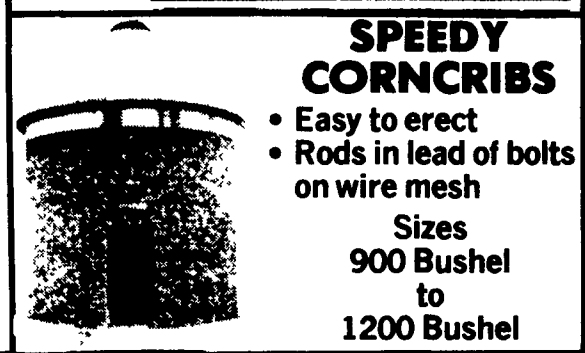
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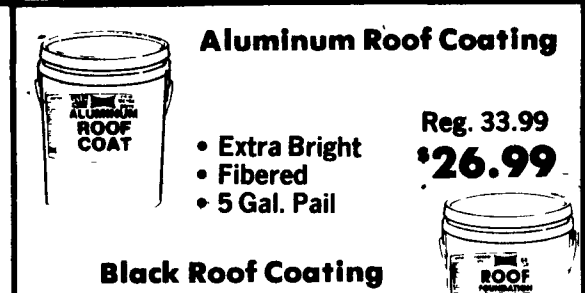
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