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EC1808 Vegetable Seed Treatment Pays

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Send 10 copies.
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Vegetable Seed Treatment Pays

Most farmers or home gardeners have had the sad experience of planting seeds in the spring only to have them rot in the soil or die off shortly after they do come through the soil. Poor seed or wet cold weather generally are blamed rather than the molds or fungi living on the seed or in the soil which are the organisms that do the killing. The most common trouble is termed "damping off" and may be due to several soil fungi which begin to grow as soon as the seeds germinate and soon infect the young sprouts causing them to rot.

Seed treatment with chemicals is one of the simplest practices to aid in controlling diseases of vegetable crops. Other important control measures are rotation, fall sanitation, and spraying and dusting. In controlling diseases of plants, prevention is easier and surer than trying to combat them after they develop. Treatment of seeds before planting should now be an accepted practice. Such treatment may involve either a wet dipping procedure or the simpler and more widely adopted practice of covering the seeds with a chemical fungicide dust. These dusts are slightly soluble in water and when such treated seed is planted, the soil moisture causes some of the chemical to dissolve and give the young plant protection from certain soil fungi. Not only does this protection generally result in better stands but it also favors the production of sturdier, larger plants by getting them safely past the stage when they are most susceptible to damage from soil fungi.

In past years many chemicals have been tested and put on the market for specific crops; however, recently several organic dusts have been perfected which have wide fields of application on many crops

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and which are relatively non-toxic to man or animals. Also excesses of these chemicals are not so liable to endanger germination as sometimes happened with the earlier chemicals. In the finely divided dust form in which they are marketed such chemicals readily adhere to the seeds when treated. The application method is very simple requiring only a teaspoon and a covered mason jar in which the seed and dust are placed and shaken for ½ minute. Instructions concerning quantity of dust to use per pound of seed is provided by the manufacturers on the label of the can and should be followed by the large operator; however, for the home gardener who only uses the small 10 cent packets of seed a very satisfactory method is to put a quantity of dust about the size of a match head into one corner of the packet, close, and shake the packet vigorously for ½ minute. This will serve to distribute the chemical evenly over the surface of the seeds. This treatment is commonly accomplished just before planting; however, treated seed may be stored for long periods without apparent harm.

The chemicals listed and recommended have been widely tested on a variety of crops and are finding favor throughout the United States. These are: Arasan, an organic sulfur dust, and Spergon, an organic chlorine dust. These may be obtained at most seed stores. From a practical standpoint the average grower will not desire to purchase more than one product for such use; therefore, either Arasan or Spergon may be chosen and used with safety on all vegetable crops. Several other brands on the market are useful on specific crops but are harmful when applied to certain others; therefore, their indescriminate use can not be advocated.