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Have You Looked at and For Your Seed Lately?

by

Robert Thornton

Extension Horticulturist, WSU

Although the planting season is fast coming to a close and it will soon be too late to do anything but talk about this years cutting and planting job its still a good idea to know what kind of job you have done. If you are still cutting seed, take the time to grab a sample (10 quart bucket is good size), weigh the total sample, count the seed pieces then calculate the average size seed piece by dividing the number of seed pieces into the weight (if you weigh in pounds be sure and multiply by 16 to come up with ounces/per seed piece rather than a fraction of a pound.) This is the minimum that you should know about your seed, one sample during the season is better than none but its a good practice to take a sample at least each day. If you aren't cutting your own seed ask the person who's cutting your seed to show you figures on the seed he is selling you. If he doesn't have it you need to do the sampling yourself.

Once you have the sample and have determined the average size of seed piece go to the next step. Determine the size distribution within the sample. To do that you will need a small scale that will weigh in ounces (a small kitchen scale will do). Weigh the individual seed pieces or at least put them into categories as follows; under 1 ounce, 1 oz - 1-1/2 oz, 1-1/2 - 2 oz, 2 - 3 oz, over 3 oz. Some who are sampling use a category of over 2 ounce, I like to add the 2-3 oz and over 2 oz because it tells you what amount of seed could have been cut once more (by hand or machine) and still have seed pieces over 1 oz and/or over 2 oz in size. If you have over 10% of the sample in either of the extreme categories, i. e. under 1 oz or over 3 oz you do not have a highly desirable seed lot.

Once you have found out something about the seed lot, the next step is to go to the field and check how the planter is doing with the seed lot. Do that by uncovering at least 10 feet of a row in each row of the planter. Measure the distance between seed pieces in each row. If you use 10 feet of a row, thats 120 inches, divide the 120 inches by the number of seed pieces you find, thats the average spacing.

Again, as with average seed size, average seed spacing is the minimum you need to know. The distribution within that average really is what tells you how good a job is being done. I figure that any seed piece that is located closer than 1/2 the average spacing to another is a double i. e. average spacing is 10 inches, all seed pieces 5 inches or less apart are doubles. Also any seed piece that is 2 times the average spacing away from another is a skip (this is being too generous but its one way of classifying what is a skip). I've sampled planting operation this spring that have nearly ideal average seed spacing and yet have more than 24 percent doubles.

If the idea of digging up the seed pieces doesn't appeal to you there is still another way for you to get an idea of how well your planter is performing. After emergence go into the field and start down a row. Measure out 50' of row and count the plants present. Divide the number of plants into 600 (50 feet x 12 inches, equals 600 inches). This is the average plant spacing. Do this for all the rows across the planter within the same location, i. e. four row planter four rows should be examined, etc. When you come to an area where the plants are spaced wildly apart (and I'm sure you will be able to find such places) dig up the area between plants, in other words, examine the blanks and see why there isn't a plant there. This will tell you about the skips but you won't know how many doubles are there. If the amount of seed you planted is correct, i. e. 20 cwt/A or more and you have very many skips you know there has to be some doubles around.

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MEETING NOTICES

Quarterly Commission Meeting: The Washington State Potato Commission will hold its Annual meeting on June 12, 1986 at the Potato Commission office, Moses Lake. All interested parties are invited to attend. The meeting will begin at 9:00 a. m.

State of Washington Potato Committee: The Annual meeting of the State of Washington Potato Committee will be held on Tuesday, June 24, 1986 at the Hallmark Inn, Moses Lake. (PLEASE NOTE: This is a change in the meeting date from the original notice). The meeting will begin at 9:00 a. m.

Washington-Oregon Potato & Onion Association Annual Meeting will be held on June 16, 17, 18, 1986 at the Alderbrook Inn, Union, Washington.