

Drying the leaf.—Hold the temperature at 120 until the leaves in the body of the plant begin to feel husky or dry, then gradually raise the heat to 125° F.; now watch the tobacco at the hottest and coolest places and, if it is doing all right at the hottest place, raise the heat at the rate of 5° every two hours until a temperature between 135 and 140° F. is reached. If the tobacco begins to scald at the hottest point the rate of increase must be slower. Hold the temperature between 135 and 140° F. until the leaf is thoroughly dry.

The ventilation may be gradually decreased after a temperature of 135° F. is reached until only a little ventilation is left at the top, after a temperature of 150° F. is reached.

Drying the stems and stalks.—After the leaf is dry raise the heat 10 degrees every hour for three hours and then raise it as fast as is desired until a temperature of 190° F. is reached. This is the last stage in the curing process and is called drying the stems and stalks. The heat may be run up to 200 or 225° F. in drying the stalks; however, this is dangerous and unnecessary and raising the heat above 190° F. reddens the face of the leaf. The heat must be held at 190° F. until all the moisture has been dried out of the stems and stalks. If any moisture is left in the stems and stalks the tobacco will run red when bulked down and may even mould and rot.

The best places to look for moisture or swelled stems are just over the firebox, and in the corner just over the first elbow joint.

It generally requires from 36 to 56 hours to yellow; from 12 to 18 hours to fix the colour; and from 40 to 58 hours to dry the stalks.

With tobacco which is extremely light in body it sometimes happens that the tip leaves begin to dry at a temperature of about 90° F., before the tobacco is yellow enough to fix the colour. This is due to a lack of moisture in the barn and may be remedied by wetting the floor of the barn well. However, it is not advisable to use water very freely after the middle leaves become sufficiently yellow to fix the colour, as then there is danger of causing the yellowed leaves to sponge.

HANDLING AFTER CURING.

After the cure is completed the barn should be opened to permit the tobacco to come into condition for taking down. Care should be exercised not to take down the tobacco while it is too high in order or there will be danger of its running red or even moulding. When the leaf can be folded without breaking it is about right; however, the large part of the middle vein should not be so pliant. The tobacco should then be bulked down shingle fashion in long bulks. When shingled down in fair order and in moderate temperatures the leaf will improve considerably in colour. In leaves with a light pea-green cast or a pea-green colour along the veins this green will run out, leaving a clear lemon-yellow leaf. After about ten days the bulk should be taken down and rebuilt, in a square shape, with the tips overlapping and the butts to the outside. The tobacco is now ready for stripping and assorting.

STEAMING TOBACCO INTO ORDER.

A period of dry weather often occurs during the curing season which prevents the tobacco coming into the proper order for handling, and the curing barn may be badly needed on account of the proximity of frost. In such cases the tobacco may be steamed into order, and while the natural order is more satisfactory, steaming is not a bad substitute. In steaming tobacco in order the barn should be fairly tight, and the steam must be under a low pressure; about 25 pounds pressure is the most satisfactory. Under high pressure the steam is too hot and drying for the best results. Care must be exercised not to get the tobacco too high in order, and it must be handled as soon as possible after steaming as it will go out of order very rapidly.