

ning to encroach on areas that are no longer burned. If not for the fires, the landscape of Illinois would have been woodland, not prairie. Fires are not only detrimental to woody plants but also to Eurasian weeds (which do not have the deep root system of our native prairie plants). Many Eurasian weeds are cool season growers and, therefore, resume growth in the early spring. Consequently early April in Chicago is the best burn time. In only a few short weeks growth begins anew.

## **ACCELERATED GROWTH OF *PIERIS JAPONICA* GROWN FROM SEED**

EVERETT VAN HOF

Van Hof Nurseries, Inc.  
54 Bristol Ferry Road  
Portsmouth, Rhode Island 02871

Propagators' efforts are not always richly rewarded. Sometimes we have failures which are beyond our control. For example, in June we had temperatures from 95° to 99°F, with equally high humidity, which caused us to lose about half of our *Pieris japonica* crop due to heat stress. This crop is the subject of my presentation today.

*Pieris japonica* seed capsules are gathered the first part of November. After the capsules open, the seeds are screened from the capsules. The seeding medium is prepared by mixing one 6-cu ft bale of peat moss with two 4-cu ft bags of coarse peat moss. Flats (20×14×3 in) are filled with this mixture and lightly pressed down to ½ in below the top of the flat. The flat is then filled with screened peat moss and leveled.

The flats are now ready for sowing. One level tablespoon of pieris seed is used per flat. After sowing, flats are watered well and a polyethylene cover is placed over the flat to retain moisture during the germination period.

After about 3 weeks the seeds have germinated and the poly cover is removed. Watering of flats is done as needed and, with every other watering, the seedlings are fertilized with Peter's 20-20-20.

In February seedlings are transplanted into flats (20×14×4 in) using Fafard No. 3 mix at the rate of 140 seedlings per flat. The same watering and feeding program continues. In April seedlings are trimmed the first time. After trimming, the seedlings are about 3 in tall. The second trimming is done in July. After the second trimming the seedlings are about 5 in tall. At

this time feeding is discontinued. The third trimming is done just prior to bed planting in the first part of September.

Planting out beds are 5½ ft wide and are prepared by tilling in peat moss. Ten seedlings are planted per row, mulched with well composted sawdust, and covered with 50% lath shade. In April the lath shade is removed and plants remain in this area for two growing seasons. The plants are fertilized twice during the first growing season with urea and once in the fall with Peters 15-15-15, and trimmed once to a height of 12 in.

During the second year in the beds, plants are fertilized 3 times and trimmed twice to the height of about 18 in. In September, some will be lined out in our nursery and the rest will be sold as liners.

CHARLIE PARKERSON: What is your sowing time?

EVERETT VAN HOF: We gather our seeds in November and sow in November.

TOM MCCLOUD: Do you pinch by hand or by chemicals?

EVERETT VAN HOF: All by hand — with hedge shears. We have not tried chemical methods.

ED MEZITT: Do you give supplementary light to seedlings in November?

EVERETT VAN HOF: No.

VOICE: Do you pick your own *Pieris* seed — and do you have trouble germinating the seed?

EVERETT VAN HOF: We pick our own seed and have no problem germinating the seed. We used to think that we had to wait until after a frost, but that does not make any difference.

VOICE: Do you use any fungicide?

EVERETT VAN HOF: No, except if we see some *Botrytis*, and then we use Benlate and Captan (1:3, v/v).

ED LOSELY: What is your Peter's fertilizer rate?

EVERETT VAN HOF: 200 ppm.

MARGERY HANDCOCK: What is your transplanting mix and the pH of the growing-on beds?

EVERETT VAN HOF: Fafards No. 3 mix is the transplanting mix. I do not know the pH of the growing-on beds.