MARKING PLANTS WITH SPRAY PAINTS

PRESSURE cans of inexpensive, quick-drying paint or spray enamel have been found useful for marking plants and plots in the field and, in certain cases, will eliminate the need for tags and stakes. A spray of paint is released upon the application of thumb pressure to a release button. At close range a rather concentrated jet of spray is produced with little drift, however, in bulk or solid-drilled plant material a cardboard can be held behind the plant part to be sprayed. A variety of colors is available, making it possible to code a piece of information or instruction. For best visibility, however, the darker colors have been found best. This method has been used only with small grains but it would be adaptable to other crops.

In general, the method seems most useful for working with material where differentiation within a group is necessary, as in early generation or spaced plant material. The color information is retained on the plant or row, making it possible to sort plants into desired groups after harvest. Where the objective is differentiation between units or groups, as in yield trials, it is usually necessary that pedigrees, plot numbers and notes must be kept on standard record forms anyway.

Examples of ways in which this method of marking has been useful are: (1) to mark F₂ and other early generation selections for later harvest; (2) to mark plants at different times for different characteristics, e.g., red for leaf rust resistance, blue for early maturity, etc.; and (3) to mark 500 hills for harvest in a 3,000-unit breeders seed nursery. Other uses may readily come to mind.—N. F. JENSEN, Professor of Plant Breeding, Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.

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