

A Seed Buyer's Checklist

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- Use certified seed, preferably early generation stocks.
- Establish cordial, long-term relationships with 2-3 good seed suppliers.
Consider planting seed lots of each variety from each supplier. If R. Burbank from one supplier does poorly, for example, another lot from another grower is available for comparison.
- Carefully check the reputation(s) of new suppliers.
- Visit prospective seed lots in the field and in storage.
- *When visiting farms, look for sound, healthy seed/crops and a neat, clean overall physical operation. Quiz the grower about cultural practices, kill down dates, yields and so on. Killing vines late to maximize seed yield is not necessarily beneficial to you.*
- Be aware of unusual production problems (excess PVY, late blight, severe freezes etc.) in production areas you are looking to for seed.
- Obtain all certification records, including results of winter grow outs.
- Develop and use a written Seed Contract.
- Ask suppliers to provide North American Seed Health Certificate for questionable lots.
- *These "certificates" are prepared by seed certification agencies and are, therefore, unbiased. They contain detailed information on certification readings, history, and more. You will need to send a copy of the form along with grower, variety and lot identification to your local seed certification office.*
- Ask for a federal/state or other good "third party" shipping point inspection of each load or seed lot. *Most U.S. states require such inspections; be certain of the situation for your seed.*
- Never forget that seed physical condition at planting can be critical!!
- *Mechanical injury and associated decay organisms (Fusarium, Erwinia, etc.), sprouting and shriveling can be more detrimental to crop performance than all certification disease readings combined!*
- Inspect seed carefully before accepting delivery.
- *After you accept delivery, you've not only bought the seed but also all its problems! Never sign off until you've thoroughly checked the load for mechanical injury, decay (Fusarium dry rot, soft rots, other), shriveling, sprouting, grade, size distribution, cleanliness and other factors affecting performance. If problems seem to be present, notify your supplier. Depending on his response, immediately call in your local commodity inspection service (in Oregon, contact the ODA Commodity Inspection Division – ph. (503) 986-4620) for a second inspection and a ruling on compliance. If inspectors agree with your assessment, or even if they don't and you remain concerned, call in other local experts for unbiased third-party opinions. Document everything!!*
- If seed problems are evident and verified, provide the grower an opportunity to make amends before proceeding further.
- Maximize seed performance by storing, cutting and planting carefully.
- *At least half of all seed performance problems are caused by events occurring after delivery. Never store seed in a cellar recently treated with sprout inhibitors! Don't suffocate, dry out, or overheat seed before or after cutting. Cut, treat and plant shortly afterward in warm (>45F), moist soil when possible. Don't irrigate before emergence in normal situations!*
- Maintain seed lot identity throughout the season.
- *Keep good records of all cutting and planting sequences and field locations for each lot.*
- Sanitize cutters and other handling equipment between lots.
- *Cutting and planting sequence and sanitation records can be crucial in lawsuits spawned by bacterial ring rot.*
- If seed disputes arise either before or after planting and emergence, call in local experts for "third party" input.
- *As noted above, allow your grower/supplier first opportunity to rectify the situation. Use the legal system only as a last resort.*
- Think long-term, beyond the current season, when dealing with seed suppliers; strive to be a good trading partner.