

POLYETHYLENE BAGS
FOR SHIPMENT AND STORAGE OF SMALL LOTS OF SEED

Howard B. Kriebel

Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station
Wooster, Ohio

Polyethylene bags, of the type used for storing frozen foods, are getting increasing use for shipment of small lots of seed of species which cannot stand drying out. Polyethylene is unique among plastic films in allowing oxygen penetration while also being waterproof. It is light, tough, and flexible even when cold.

During the past two years these bags have been sent to cooperators for shipment of sugar maple seed to this station from all over the range of the species. The plastic bags were taken out in the field for individual collections, and fastened with a rubber band or "Twistem". A numbered aluminum tag was enclosed in the bag to identify the lot. The bags were shipped enclosed in a clothbag or cardboard carton.

In a few cases surface mold developed on the seed inside the bag during shipment. This did not appear to affect the viability of the seed, however; providing it was stored properly after arrival.

The seed may also be stratified right in the same bags. Sugar maple seed for greenhouse planting was stored in the bags until it began to sprout, as sugar maple will do in stratification. Mixture of milled sphagnum or peat with the seed eliminated problems of heating and molding during stratification. Since the bags are transparent, the condition of the seed could be observed at any time. The bags are stored on a shelf or floor in a cold storage room or refrigerator.

Small trees, 3 to 4 feet in height, were also shipped very successfully, using polyethylene bags of the large size used for wrapping turkeys. The trees were shipped bare root, tied in small bundles. The roots were placed inside the bag, which contained moist sphagnum moss. Burlap was wrapped and tied around the polyethylene bag. The bundles of trees were kept in cold storage over the winter without any further treatment after arrival. Only 3 out of 154 trees failed to leaf out after planting in the spring.