

THE PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE OF AN IDENTIFICATION OF GARDEN PEA VARIETIES IN THE SEEDLING STAGE

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INTRODUCTION

A quick identification of garden pea varieties may be very useful as far as it permits an effective check on the identity and purity of seeds grown for commercial purposes. It would be very attractive if, with the help of seed and young plant characters, the observations could be made in winter, between the last harvest and the next sowing.

Seed characters are helpful but of limited use for the identification of a variety. VAN DER VAART (4) described the identification of pea varieties in the seedling stage. He found that when the leaf in the third node is developed, the shape of the first two leaves (scales) of young seedlings is very characteristic. In this way VAN DER VAART, could distinguish fourteen agricultural pea varieties. Using VAN DER VAART'S method G. P. MORRIS (2) distinguished 40 pea varieties, including some garden peas, while PETERS (3) distinguished 20 varieties, mainly horticultural peas.

At the Institute of Horticultural Plant Breeding, Wageningen, the present writers have tried to find out if the characters of the first two leaves could be used for the identification of all the garden pea varieties in their collection (about 500 varieties) and for an effective check of the purity of commercial varieties.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

During the winter months December and January young pea seedlings were grown in air-conditioned glasshouses at the Institute (1). All varieties were grown at a constant temperature of 20 °C, while some were also grown at a constant temperature of 26 °C and 17 °C.

Seeds were sown in trays, filled with a mixture consisting of equal parts of sandy soil and peat, covered with a layer of coarse sand about 5 cm thick. Before sowing, the soil was watered thoroughly, to avoid watering and subsequent damping off during the growing period. Seeds were disinfected with T.M.T.D. and sown in the layer of sand. Additional light from 450 W Philips' H.O 2000 lamps was given from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.; one lamp per square meter, hanging 0.85 m above the soil surface. Thirty seeds of each variety were sown.

About twenty seedlings were used for preparing shadowgraphs of the leaf-scales. The plants used for the shadowgraphs were chosen at random; very weak plants were not used. At 20 °C the shadowgraphs could be prepared 14 days after sowing, when the fourth leaf of the plants was about to unfold. The young plants were lifted and, if necessary, stored in polythene bags to avoid wilting. The scales were torn from the plants by bending them over the edge of a sharp knife (Fig. 1) and then put on the glass of a 13 × 18 cm photographic printing frame. The glass had previously been

moistened with water to avoid curling of the very small scales. The scales on the glass were covered first with a thin sheet of transparent polythene, then with a sheet of phototypic paper (ozalid black K) after which the printing frame was closed (Fig. 2).

If it is necessary to multiply the prints transparent ozalid Radex paper can be used successfully. After illumination the print was developed in ammonia. In this way shadowgraphs were made of a collection of about 500 garden pea varieties.

INFLUENCE OF DIFFERENT GROWING TEMPERATURES

Space sufficient to grow several hundreds of varieties was only available in an air-conditioned glasshouse with a constant temperature of 20 °C. To determine the influence of the growing temperature on the shape and size of the scales some varieties were also grown at a constant temperature of 26° and 17 °C. Fig. 3 shows some typical

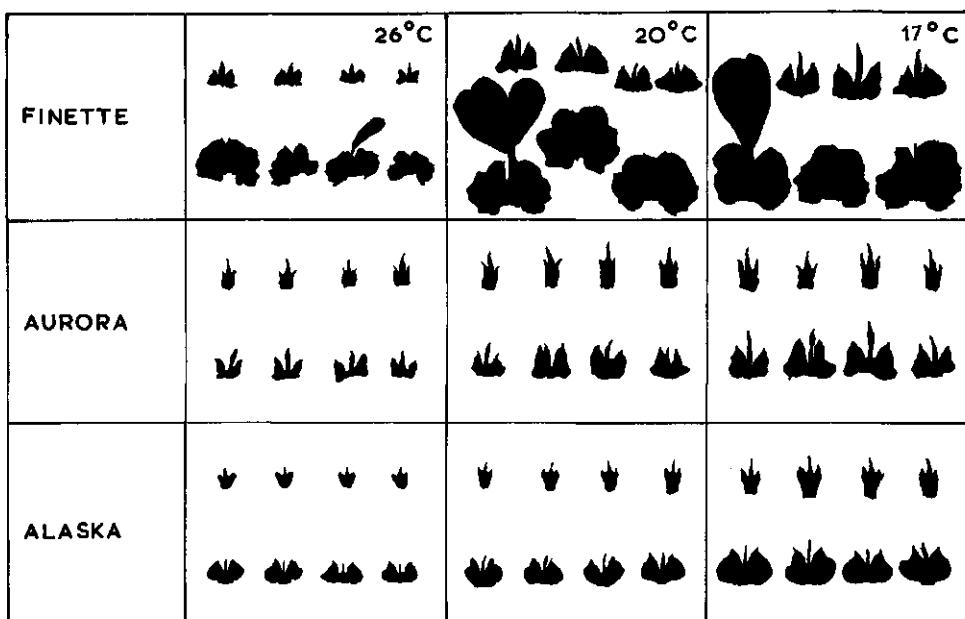


FIG. 3. SIZE AND SHAPE OF SCALES AT DIFFERENT TEMPERATURES. UPPER ROW OF EACH VARIETY FIRST SCALE, LOWER ROW SECOND SCALE

scales of the varieties Finette, Aurora and Alaska, grown at 26°, 20° and 17 °C respectively. The shadowgraphs were made at the time at which the fourth leaf was about to develop. Apparently the shape of the scales changes only slightly with the different temperatures, but the size is strongly influenced. The scales are small at 26°, markedly larger at 20°C and larger still at 17 °C.

These differences in size occurred both in winter-grown plants that received additional light and in spring-grown plants without additional light. From this it follows that a reliable comparison of the scale shadowgraphs of a certain variety with

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FIG. 1. REMOVAL OF SCALE-LEAVES

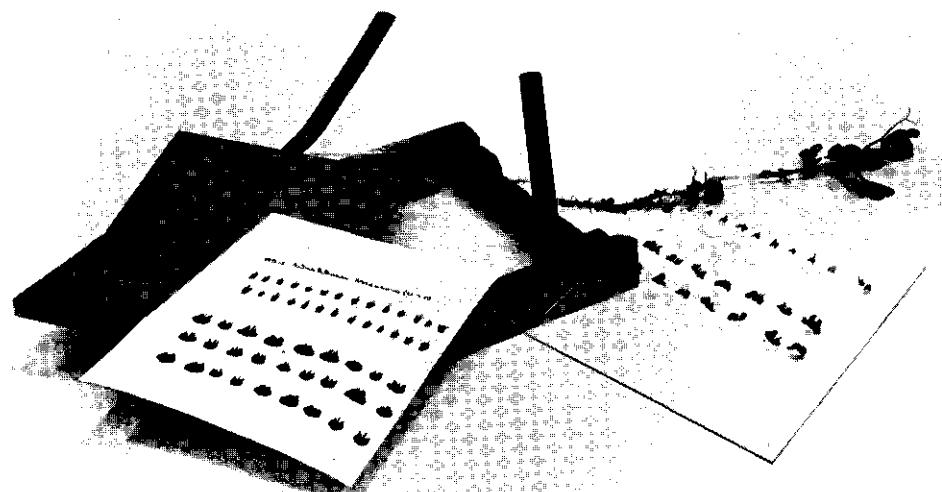


FIG. 2. PRINTING FRAME

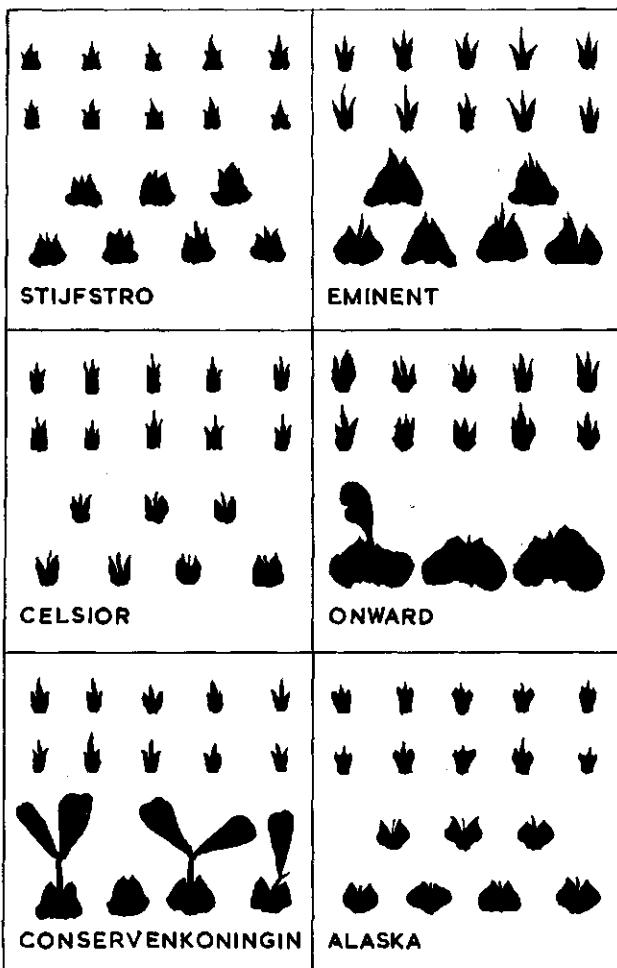


FIG. 6. SOME TYPICAL FIRST AND SECOND SCALES OF SIX PEA VARIETIES. UPPER TWO ROWS OF EACH VARIETY FIRST SCALE; LOWER ROW(S) SECOND SCALE

varieties, 13 mixtures were made at the institute by a co-worker, who in other respects was not concerned with these experiments. These mixtures contained three varieties at the most, the seed colour and scales of which were very much alike.

It was possible to detect that there was more than one variety in all the seed samples. Here differences in growth habit etc. of the young plants proved to be very useful for the detection. In most cases the names of the mixed varieties were determined. In a few cases it was impossible to determine all the varieties of the mixture correctly; if a third variety was present in the mixture it was not always discovered, due to the fact that it was not sufficiently distinct from the other varieties. The number of commercial varieties in current use in a certain country is much smaller than the large number of varieties used in the present experiments. Consequently the differences

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between the varieties when mixed will be greater than in our experiments, in which moreover mixtures were chosen of varieties that were very similar to each other.

So we may conclude that mixtures in commercial seed can nearly always be readily detected in the seedling stage of the plants. In most cases it is also possible to identify the mixed varieties.

SUMMARY

1. With the aid of the first and second scale, in combination with seed and other characteristics of the young plants, it is possible to identify the numerous commercial garden pea varieties.

A reliable comparison of scale shadowgraphs is only possible if the temperature conditions under which the young seedlings have grown have been as nearly identical as possible.

2. Mixtures in commercial seed can nearly always be readily detected in the seedling stage of the plants. In most cases it is also possible to identify the mixed varieties.

SAMENVATTING

De praktische betekenis van een identificatie van doperwtenrassen in het zaailingstadium

1. Het is mogelijk om met behulp van de eerste en de tweede knopschub, in combinatie met zaad- en andere eigenschappen van de jonge planten, het zeer grote aantal in de handel voorkomende doperwtenrassen te identificeren. Een betrouwbare vergelijking van lichtdrukken van de knopschubben is alleen mogelijk als de temperatuursomstandigheden, waaronder de zaailingen werden geteeld, zo goed mogelijk aan elkaar gelijk zijn.

2. Vermengingen in handelszaad kunnen meestal reeds in het zaailingstadium van de planten ontdekt worden. In de meeste gevallen is het ook mogelijk om de rassen in het mengsel te identificeren.

LITERATURE

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