

PREPARING BURLEY TOBACCO FOR MARKET

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Preparing Burley Tobacco for Market

RUSSELL A. HUNT, *Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky*
ROY R. BENNETT, *Extension Service, North Carolina State College*
JOHN W. VAN ARSDALL, JR., *Tobacco Branch, AMS, U.S. Department of Agriculture*
GILBERT N. RHODES, *Agricultural Extension Service, University of Tennessee*
G. R. MATHEWS, *Agricultural Extension Service, Virginia Polytechnic Institute*

Proper stripping and sorting of your burley tobacco are important if you are to get the highest price for your crop.

Stripping and sorting the crop into grades according to group, quality, and color enable the manufacturer and leaf buyers to obtain their specific needs. When offered for sale, leaf poorly stripped and sorted may not meet the needs of specific manufacturers or leaf buyers. Tobacco is still being bought, to a large extent, on its looks and uniformity. Burley tobacco properly stripped, sorted, tied and attractively displayed will usually sell for the highest current price on the market.

Preparing your burley tobacco for market involves a number of steps. All are important. This publication gives detailed information on each phase of preparation.

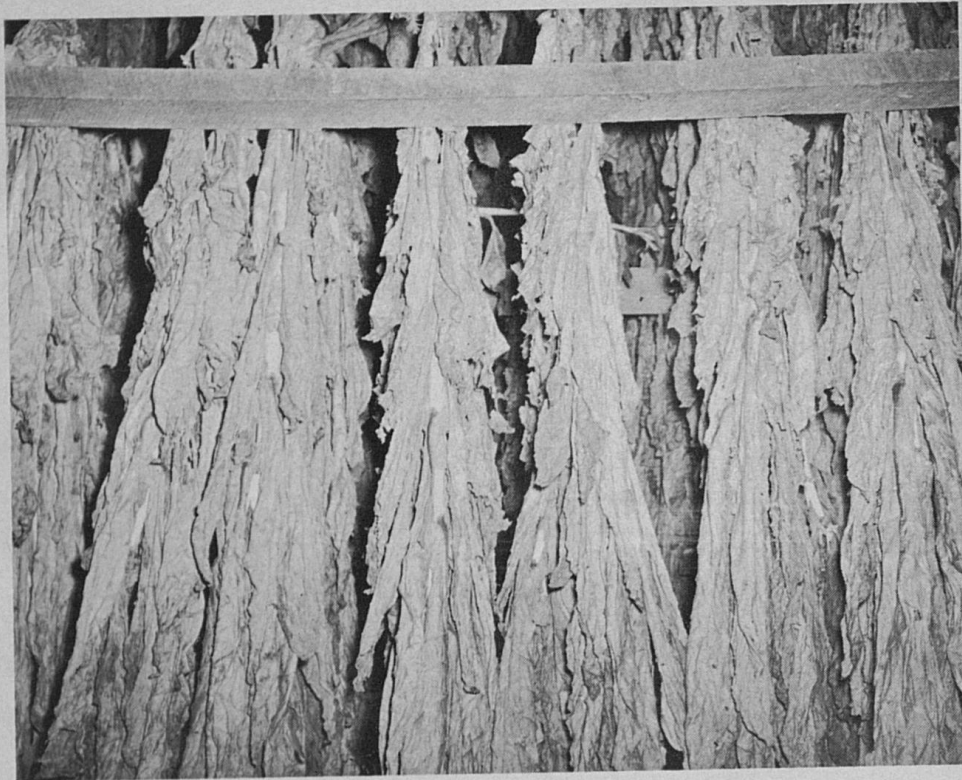
REMOVING TOBACCO FROM THE BARN

The first step in preparation is to remove your tobacco from the barn at the proper time.

If left hanging indefinitely in the barn, burley tobacco loses weight and quality and the color fades or changes. It is desirable to remove your crop from the barn as soon as it is ready and conditions permit. Tobacco is ready for bulking and stripping when the leaves and the stems are fully cured, and the top leaves, when in light case, break clean when removed from the plant. In light

ACKNOWLEDGMENT FOR COLOR ILLUSTRATIONS

The inclusion of color illustrations in this circular was made possible by a grant from the American Suppliers Division of The American Tobacco Company. The American Tobacco Company has an abiding interest in the preparation of the crop for market, and has evidenced a genuine appreciation of the problems confronting the farmer as he prepares his crop for sale. The company has expressed the hope that this publication will be helpful to all growers.



Burley tobacco cured, ready for bulking

case, the top leaves do not feel dry, yet they contain only enough moisture to make them pliable.

In early fall the crop may be stripped from the rail or enough bulked to provide three or four days' stripping. After the stalks are cured the entire crop may be taken down from the rails and bulked. Regardless of the time required, the crop must be thoroughly cured and in keeping order before it is bulked.

Have your tobacco in good order before bulking. It is in good order when the stem or midrib has sufficient moisture that it will not break easily but before the leaf surface becomes moist.

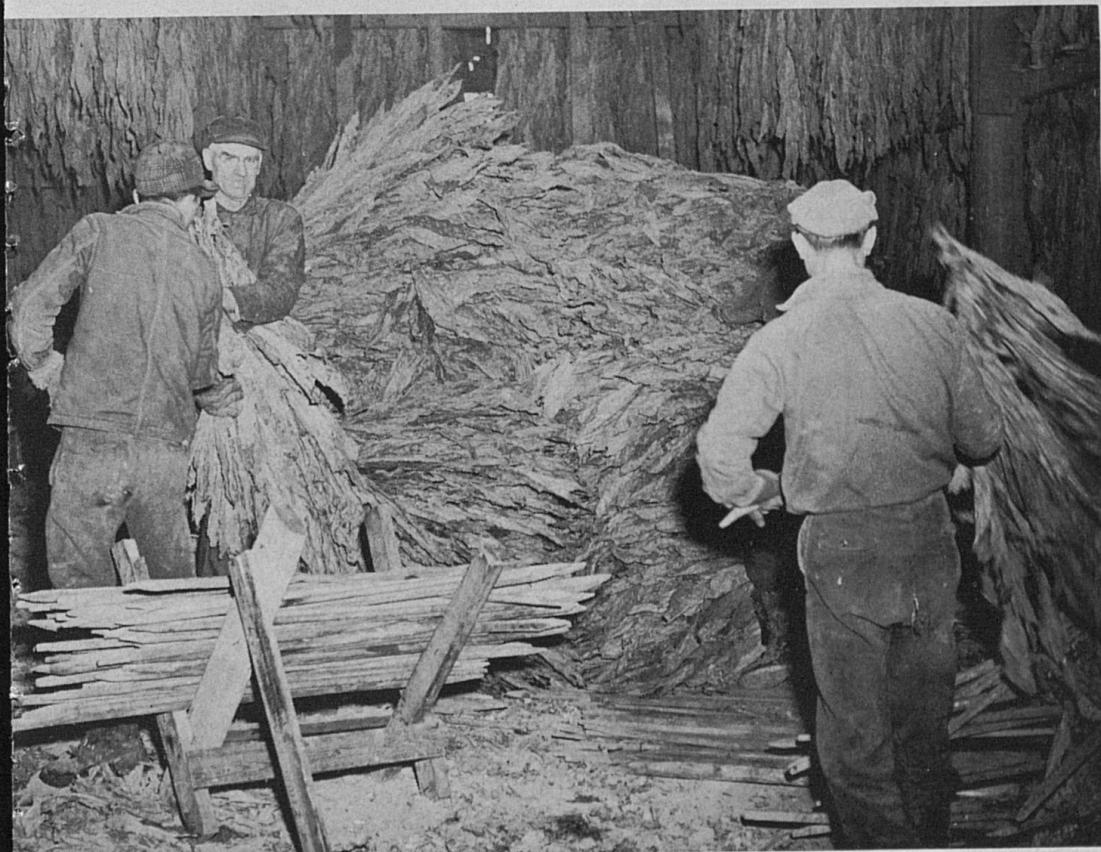
Bulk tobacco when it first comes in case during a rainy period. Do not take it down and bulk it during a heavy fog. When bulked during a fog or after it becomes high in case, tobacco often becomes *too* high in order in the bulk and heats. Early in the season bulk only enough for three or four days' stripping. After stalks have cured bulk the entire crop. Tobacco in proper condition can best be kept that way by bulking.

Lay a good platform or floor heavy enough to prevent tobacco from absorbing moisture or earthy odor from the ground. Remove tobacco from sticks so it will lie closely in bulk, holding its original case and keeping out air and dirt. Bulk the tobacco in a double rick, with the tips overlapping in the middle and the butts of the stalks to the outside.

Cover the completed bulk with a tarpaulin, old blanket, or a thin layer of tobacco sticks to prevent drying and breakage, and to keep the crop clean.

THE STRIPPING ROOM

A comfortable stripping room is needed for good tobacco stripping. It should be large enough to accommodate the workers and have a stripping table, adequate lighting, and some provision for heating. Wall presses are desirable.



Bulking burley tobacco preparatory to stripping



Note the essential items in this stripping room—stripping table, good lights, press, stick rack, and heating stove.

The stripping table should extend the length of the room, be about 36 inches from the floor and 4½ to 5 feet deep. A top of 3-inch slatted material or hardware cloth is recommended.

LIGHTING THE STRIPPING ROOM

Adequate lighting is necessary for workers to sort tobacco according to grade and color, and to determine quality. It is necessary to have proper light as color distinctions often determine the quality of the tobacco. With poor light, much tobacco may seem uniform in color, whereas proper light conditions would reveal mixed colors. Provide the best light possible on the farm. Light may be supplied by:

1. **FLUORESCENT LIGHTS**—Have one for each worker, placed about 3½ feet above the stripping table. Use a fixture with two 40-watt deluxe cool white, or one 40-watt deluxe cool white tube and one 40-watt daylight tube if preferred.

2. SKYLIGHTS—If you do not have electricity, skylights are the next best substitute. Skylights on the north side of the roof, directly over the stripping table, are satisfactory.

3. SIDE WINDOWS—The next best light is provided by side windows, located on the north side of the room, in the side wall, with the bottom of the window sash 6 or 8 inches above the stripping table, and with the windows extending the full length of the table. Tilting the top of the windows 6 inches toward the table improves lighting conditions.

STRIPPING AND SORTING

The purpose of stripping is to bring together leaves of like group, color, and quality from different stalks of tobacco.

First Step—Sorting the Plants

As plants are removed from sticks and before bulking, they should, when *necessary*, be sorted into three lots:



Removing tobacco from stalk under fluorescent light



This stalk of tobacco is cured and ready for stripping.

1. Plants that are small or undersize.
2. Plants that show a decided green color.
3. Plants of normal size and clear color.

This division will greatly simplify sorting and will help you maintain uniformity of the several grades. Each lot of plants should be worked separately.

Second Step—Grouping

Normally the leaves grow on the stalk in a certain order—flyings at the bottom, thin leaves or lugs a little higher up, leaf next, and then tips. Sorting will be simplified further if you keep each of these groups by itself. (See photograph on page 23.)

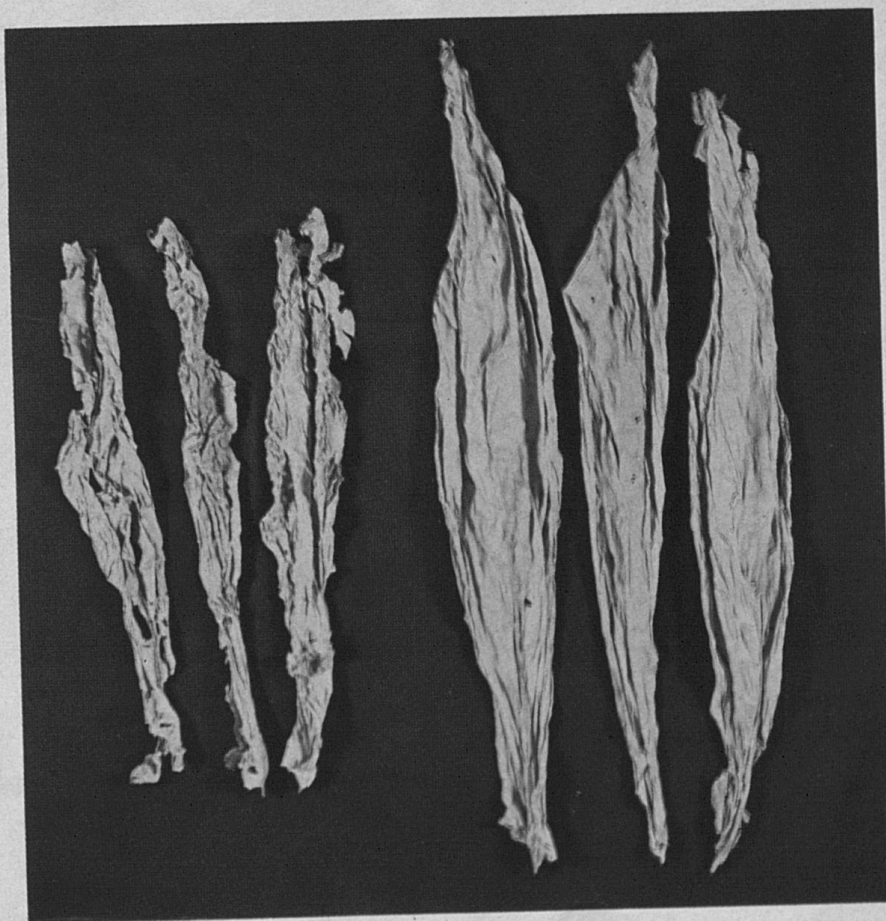
FLYINGS

The first leaves you strip are those at the base of the plant. These are known as flyings and are recognized by their thin body and by a considerable degree of injury characteristic of leaves grown near the soil. They are also shorter than leaves produced higher up the stalk, with the exception of tip leaves. As you remove the flyings, separate them into lots according to quality, which is largely based on the amount of injury and on color. Tie the leaves of each quality into “hands” or bundles. The tie-leaf wrapped around each hand should be of the same quality and

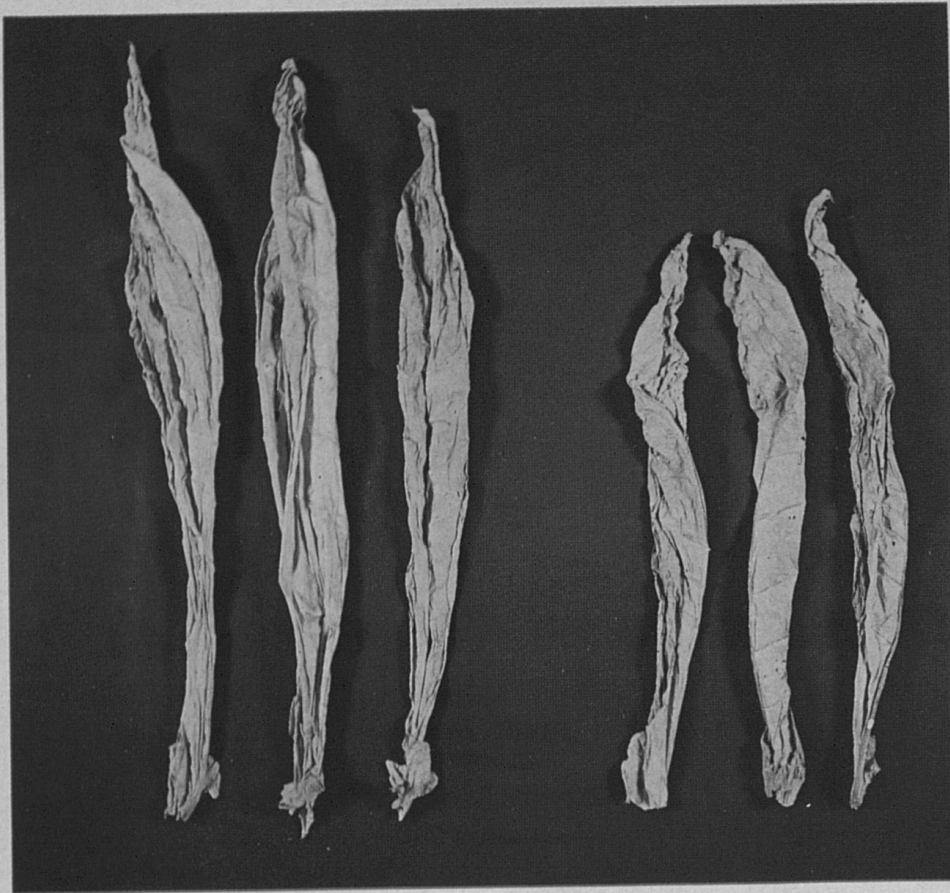
color as the tobacco in the hand. Then the heads will not contrast with the leaves. Heads should be about as big around as a silver dollar. Place hands of the different qualities and colors on separate sticks.

LUGS

Next above the flyings are the lugs. These leaves, usually the longest and widest on the plant, are thin to medium in body, are larger than flyings, and do not have the injury characteristic of leaves grown near the soil. In grouping medium-bodied tobacco, certain characteristics closely related to body, such as smoothness, fiber size, finish, oiliness, shape of tips, and color shade, are considered in determining the leaves to be placed in the lug group.



Leaves removed from the stalk. On the left are flyings; on the right, lugs. Flyings are short and show injury. Lugs are longer and sounder. Both are light-colored and thin-bodied.



These leaves show the characteristics of bright leaf (left) and tannish red leaf (right). When cured, leaf tobacco folds along the midrib.

Lugs are usually cured with an open face, with the stem at or near the center of the cured leaf.

As lugs are stripped, sort them also according to quality and color. Body and color are closely associated. The light-colored leaves are usually thin-bodied, and the red, or darker colored ones, are of medium body. The hands of each subdivision of lugs should be almost alike in color and quality. Assemble hands of each quality and color and place them on separate sticks.

LEAF

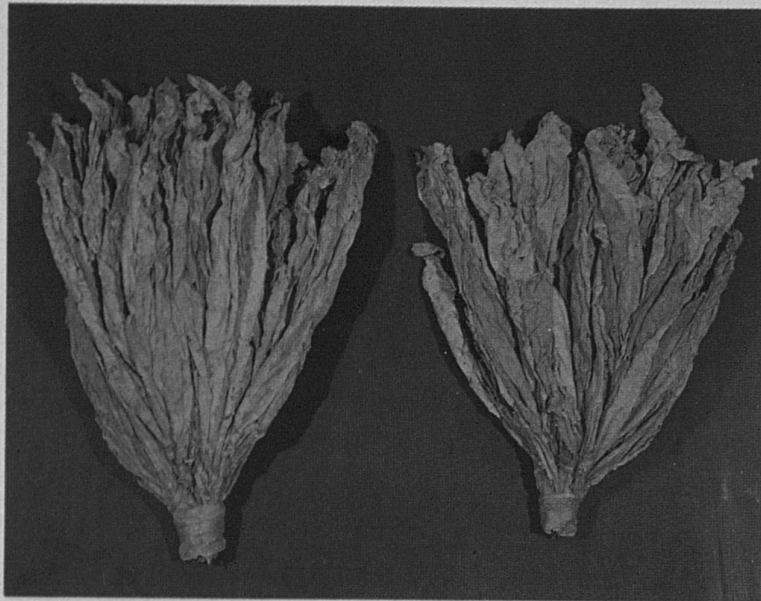
After you remove the lugs, the rest of the leaves to be stripped will fall into the leaf group. Leaves of this group from a single plant vary considerably in length, with the tip leaves being the shortest.



Hands of flyings (left) and lugs (right). This shows the characteristics of each and the appearance of a proper-sized hand.

(Below) Hands of leaf tobacco. Leaf grades are heavier-bodied, usually darker, and the leaves are not so wide as those of lugs.





Hands of red leaf (left) and tips (right). Red leaf is usually heavy-bodied and lacks the finish of bright leaf. Leaf tobacco shorter than 16 inches is known as tips.

Leaf tobacco when cured folds like a book, with the stem at the side. This feature aids in recognizing leaf and is helpful in separating lugs and leaf tobacco.

The first leaf tobacco removed from the stalk is longer, lighter in color, and thinner bodied than the leaf farther up the stalk. This is known as bright leaf. Bright leaf has a tan-colored face and back and usually shows maturity and finish.

The darker colored, heavy-bodied leaf found above the bright leaf is known as red leaf. Red leaf has a dull face and back and usually lacks finish.

Tips are the short leaves at the top of the stalk and are less than 16 inches long. They will generally blend into two grades depending upon body and color.

As you strip the leaves of the leaf group sort them according to quality, color, and length, and tie them into hands. Then assemble the hands of each quality, color, and length; place them on sticks; and bulk them.

“Nondescript” is a group having leaves which may come from any part of the stalk where there is considerable injury, waste, houseburn, etc. Generally, the very bottom leaves will be dark

and show considerable injury. Keep them separate from other flyings, as they are usually nondescript.

Then press the sticks of sorted tobacco and bulk them. Cover the bulk carefully to protect the leaf from trash and dirt, preserve color, and prevent drying out.

Practically all crops of burley are different. Some crops will have four grades, while others will have from five to eight grades.

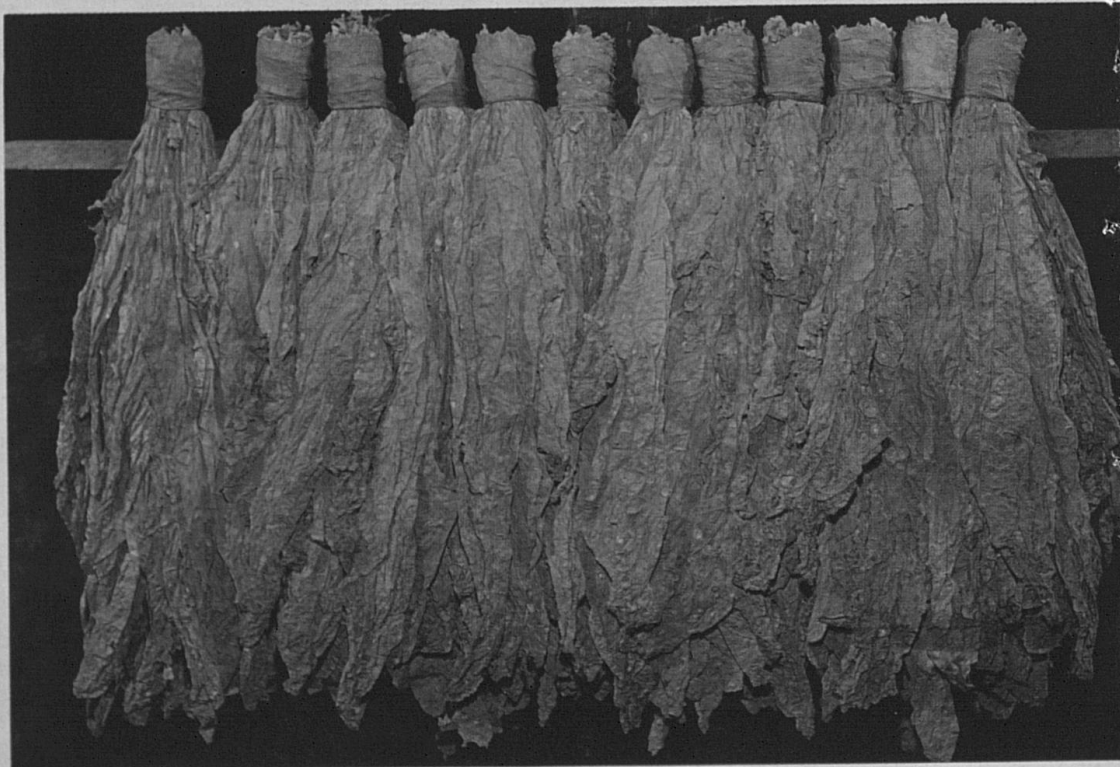


Tying a hand of stripped tobacco. Note the size of the tied hand is about the diameter of a silver dollar.



Twelve hands of leaf fill this stick and have been pressed before being bulked.

(Below) This stick has 12 medium-sized hands of flyings, a proper number for good handling.



Use as few grades as possible to separate like groups, qualities, and colors. Do not mix leaves of different groups in order to avoid having an extra grade.

Quite often you will have green or pink leaves of tobacco. Mixing this off-colored tobacco with the well-colored tobacco will usually cause the grade to be lowered to that of the off-colored tobacco. It may then be designated as a mixed color.

A mixed group consists of leaves of different groups such as leaf, lugs and flyings tied together.

Third Step—Tying

Tie all grades of tobacco in uniform-sized hands with heads having the diameter of a silver dollar. Very large hands of tobacco are difficult to dry without damage. Moisture left under the tie leaf of oversized heads causes mold or rot in storage. Large hands and heads of tobacco sometime cause difficulty on the sales floor and in the re-dryer.

Tie each hand securely so that it does not break or come untied during normal handling and marketing. Tie leaves should not extend farther than about 2 inches from the butt of the leaves. The tie leaf should be of the same color and quality as the grade being tied. Do not cap over the head of the hand with the tie leaf. A careful, neat job of tying will make the tobacco more attractive to the buyer and will generally result in a higher price.

PRESSING AND BULKING STRIPPED TOBACCO

Prepare a good platform for your stripped tobacco before stripping it. Use tobacco presses to improve the appearance of your tobacco. Presses can be made on the farm and are relatively inexpensive.¹ They are usually placed on the walls of a stripping room. Have one press for every two strippers. As you fill each stick (preferably 12 or 14 hands), place it in a press and leave it there until you fill the next stick. After you take the sticks from the press place them in bulk and cover the bulk. Press your tobacco according to its group. Never press when the tobacco is in high order.

¹ Plans for making homemade presses may be obtained from your state agricultural extension service or experiment station, or from the Tobacco Section, U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Proper pressing of stripped tobacco improves its appearance and thus increases its marketability. This homemade press can be made easily and economically.

(Below) During the early period of stripping, the hands of stripped tobacco are placed in hollow bulks, with a few empty sticks inserted to permit air circulation and to keep the stripped tobacco from heating.

(Photo: The Progressive Farmer)



Flyings and lugs may be pressed a little firmer than the leaf groups. Tobacco pressed too solidly is difficult to inspect, and often the leaf surface will be bruised. Properly pressed tobacco bulks smoother, and air spaces which cause it to dry out and collect dirt are reduced. It also packs more evenly on baskets, presents a neat appearance, and gives an impression of careful preparation.

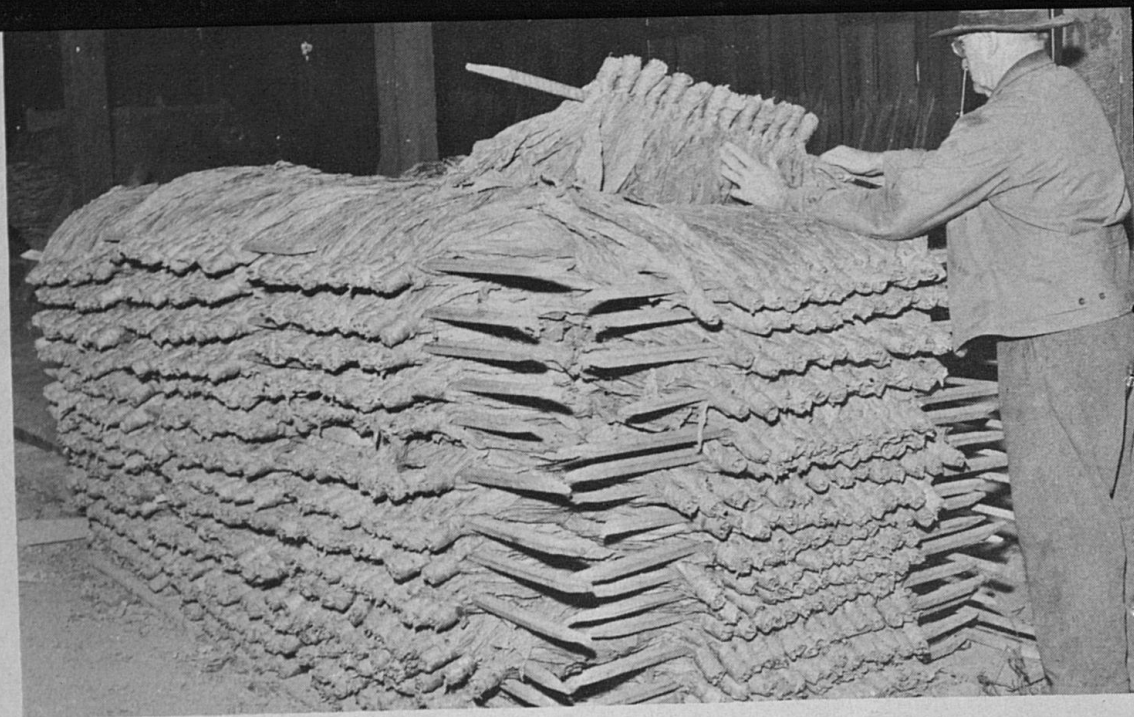
LOADING STRIPPED TOBACCO

When your tobacco has been stripped, the next operation is to sort the sticks of stripped tobacco into their respective groups. Each group then should be matched in regard to quality and color. Sort in daylight or under fluorescent lighting, never by yellow (Mazda) electric or lantern light.



A covering of sticks keeps bulked stripped tobacco clean and helps prevent bulk from drying out.

(Photo: The Progressive Farmer)



In the latter part of the stripping season, after the moisture content of the tobacco has decreased, the stripped tobacco may be removed from the hollow bulks and placed in a solid bulk.

(Photo: The Progressive Farmer)

After the sticks of tobacco have been carefully sorted and checked, they should be packed on the truck in the following order: first the sticks of the lowest quality flyings and then the rest of that kind in order of quality until the best quality flyings are placed. Next, load the highest quality lugs and then the rest of the lugs in order of quality until all are placed. The leaf is then loaded, beginning with that of the highest quality and, then, in order of quality to the lowest.

Be careful in loading so that no leaves are crumpled or otherwise injured. Also, place a marker of some kind between each group or quality of groups so they can be kept separate. This makes them much easier to identify when the crop is unloaded on the warehouse floor. Tobacco can be badly mixed when it is unloaded for sale, since this work is often done by careless or inexperienced helpers. The use of markers for each lot will help prevent mixing of tobacco when it is unloaded for sale.

UNLOADING STRIPPED TOBACCO AND PLACING ON WAREHOUSE FLOOR FOR SALE

At the sales floor each lot should be placed on a separate basket. It is recommended that the baskets of tobacco be arranged on the warehouse floor so that they will be sold in the following order:

1. Lowest quality flyings first and then in order of quality to best flyings.

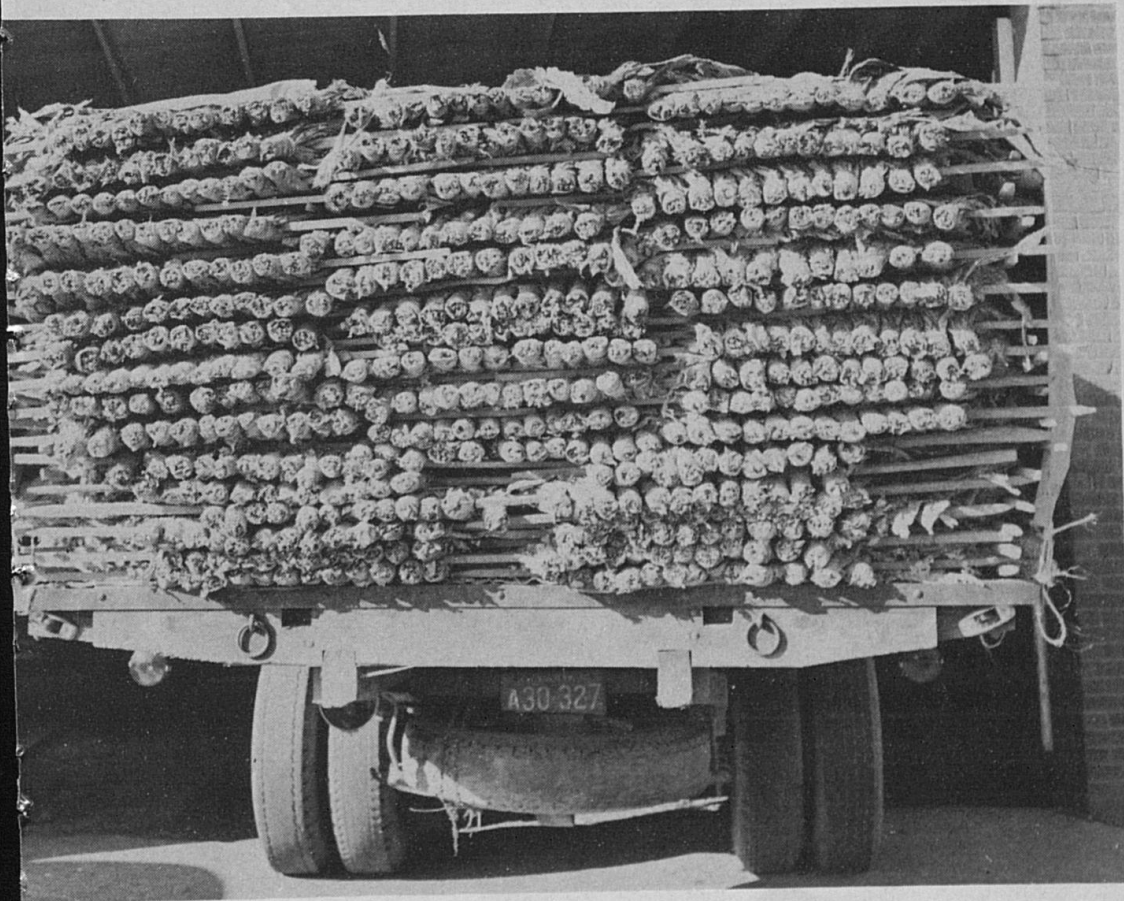
2. Lugs in order of quality from highest to lowest.

3. Leaf grades in sequence from the highest to lowest quality.

How your tobacco is arranged for sale at auction may greatly influence your returns. If your tobacco is sold in order of quality it assists both the starter and the buyer. Tobacco so displayed is more attractive and usually sells better than that laid out for sale without regard to group or quality.

ARRANGING CROP ON BASKETS FOR SALE

The size or weight of lots offered for sale is important. Extremely large lots are sometimes regarded with suspicion. On the other hand, very small lots are undesirable to warehousemen and



A tobacco truck arriving at the warehouse from the farm. The covering has been removed to show the arrangement of the sticks of tobacco on the truck.



Packing tobacco on a basket in the warehouse

buyers. A small basket of tobacco will occupy as much floor space as a basket of maximum weight.

The size of the lots will depend on the acreage grown and the range of quality, color, and length. Ordinarily, lots should weigh not less than 100 pounds, and lots of more than 700 pounds are difficult for the inspector to examine and grade satisfactorily. It is advisable to keep small lots of each stripping at home until enough of each grade is accumulated to make up a lot of marketable size rather than to permit several small lots of different quality to be placed on one basket. In packing tobacco on baskets, care should be taken that the tobacco presents a neat appearance. *Properly sorted, neatly prepared, and correctly arranged lots of tobacco sell at the highest current market prices.*

WHEN YOUR TOBACCO IS SOLD

Before your tobacco is sold you should have unbiased information on the grade and approximate support price of it. You can receive much of this information at stripping and grading demonstrations conducted by government tobacco inspectors. You will

then be able to understand the grades placed on your tobacco on the day of sale. This will also enable you to have a much *larger* part in selling your product.

The grade placed on the warehouse ticket will give the correct description of each lot of tobacco, and the *Daily Tobacco Price Reports*, issued by the Tobacco Division of the Agricultural Marketing Service, will indicate the average selling price for each grade at the time the report was issued. Having this information, you can know when your tobacco is selling in line with the market price for its grade. You are entitled to this information so you can market your tobacco on a basis of fair competition.

Be with your tobacco when it is sold. Obtain a copy of the *Daily Tobacco Market Price Report* from the grader or the warehouse. Compare the price offered for all grades with the price paid the day before for the same grades. If the price offered is not satisfactory as compared with the average auction price the day before for that grade, you may reject the bid and offer the



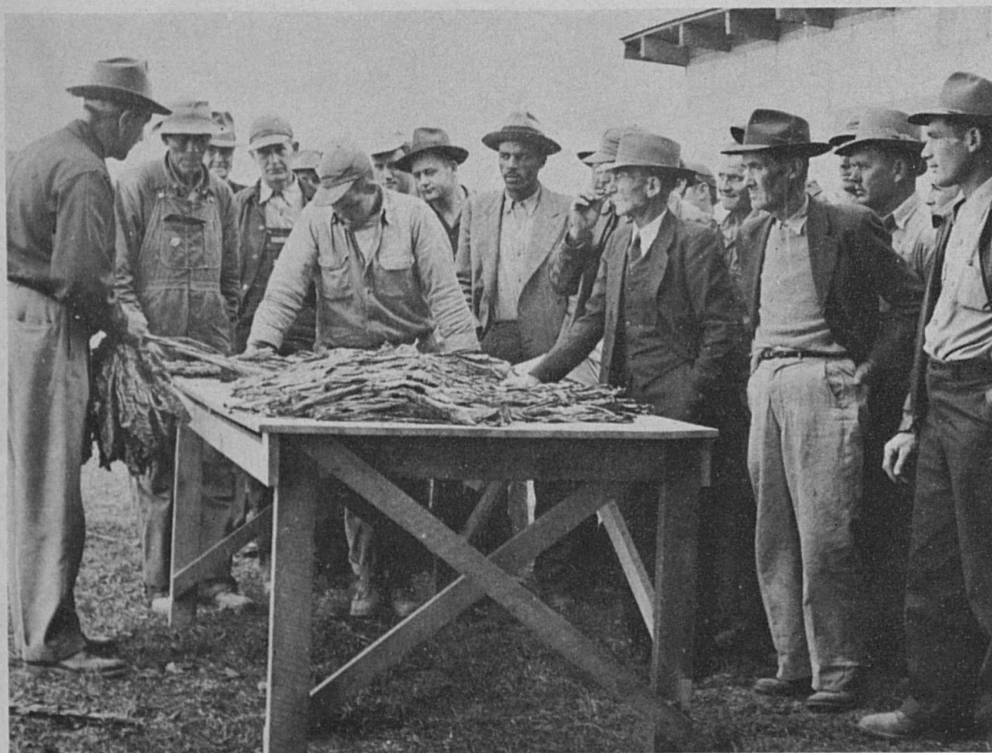
Tobacco crop on the sales floor ready for selling

tobacco for resale. Consult the government grader if you have any question about accepting the bid.

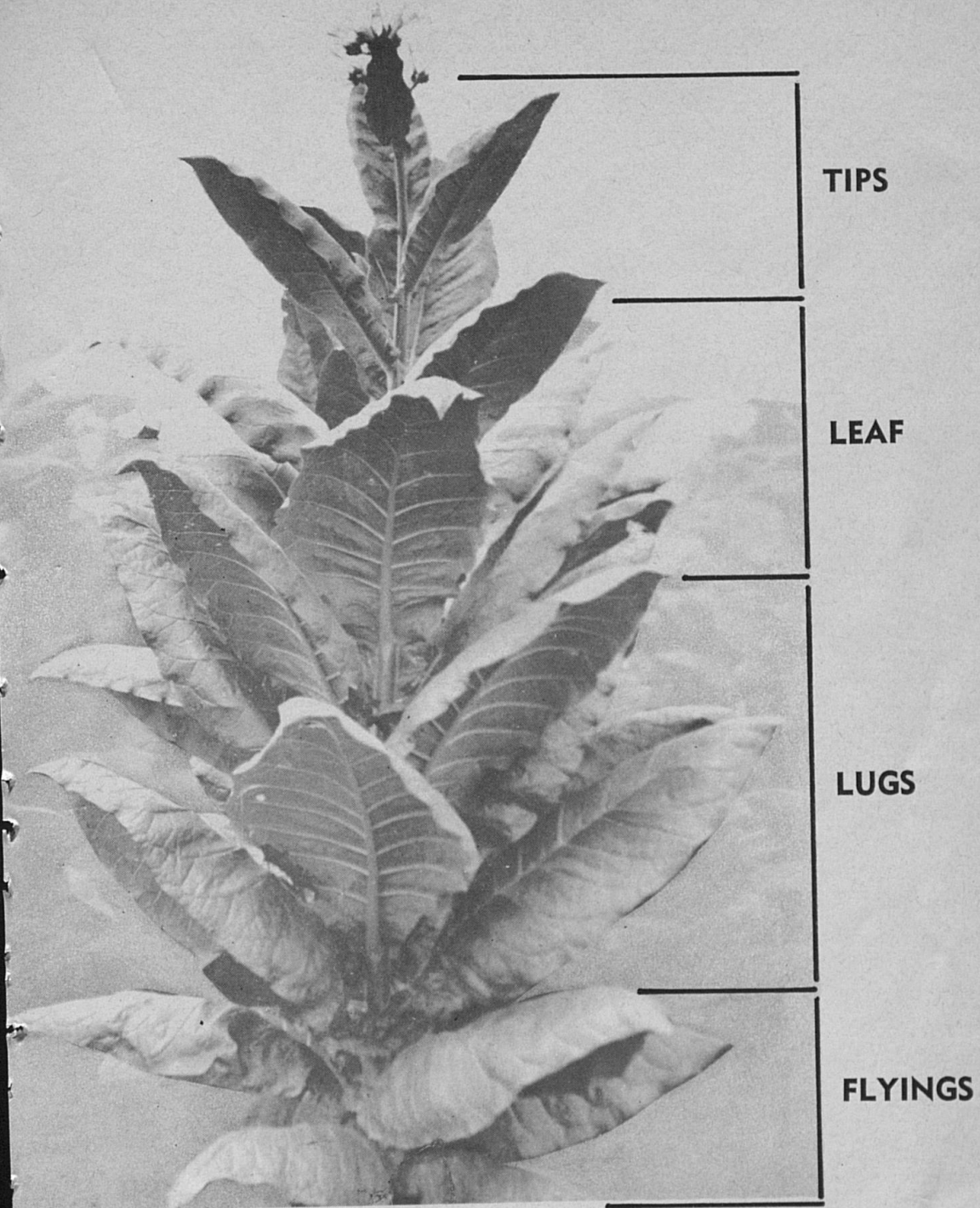
Stripping and sorting demonstrations are conducted by the Tobacco Inspection Service to give farmers information on preparing tobacco for market, and to help them better understand the objectives of inspection and market news and how these services can benefit them. Attend the demonstration in your area.

RELATIONSHIP OF STRIPPING TO STANDARD GRADES

There are more than 100 standard grades of burley tobacco. You do not need to remember the characteristics of them in preparing your crops for market. However, if crops are properly stripped by group, quality and color, as previously explained, each lot of stripped tobacco will fall into one of the standard grades. Thus, good preparation makes for accurate grading on the sales floor, better satisfied farmers, and improved public relations throughout the burley industry.



A federal grader (left) demonstrating the preparation of tobacco for market



This shows the approximate location on the tobacco plant where the different types of leaves grow. See next page for "Key to Standard Grade Marks" and "Summary of Standard Grades."

KEY TO STANDARD GRADE MARKS

U.S. Type 31—Burley

<i>Group</i>	<i>Quality</i>		<i>Color</i>
B—Leaf	1—Choice	L—Buff	V—Greenish
T—Tips	2—Fine	F—Tan	VF—Greenish tan
C—Lugs or Cutters	3—Good	FR—Tannish Red	VR—Greenish red
X—Flyings	4—Fair	R—Red	G—Green
M—Mixed Group	5—Low	D—Dark red	GF—Green tan
N—Nondescript		K—Variegated	GR—Green red
S—Scrap		M—Mixed	

SUMMARY OF STANDARD GRADES

35 Grades of Leaf

B1F	B1FR	B1R							
B2F	B2FR	B2R							
B3F	B3FR	B3R		B3K	B3M	B3VF	B3VR	B3GF	B3GR
B4F	B4FR	B4R	B4D	B4K	B4M	B4VF	B4VR	B4GF	B4GR
B5F	B5FR	B5R	B5D	B5K	B5M	B5VF	B5VR	B5GF	B5GR

21 Grades of Tips

T3F	T3FR	T3R							
T4F	T4FR	T4R	T4D	T4K	T4VF	T4VR	T4GF	T4GR	
T5F	T5FR	T5R	T5D	T5K	T5VF	T5VR	T5GF	T5GR	

24 Grades of Lugs or Cutters

C1L	C1F						X1L	X1F		
C2L	C2F						X2L	X2F		
C3L	C3F	C3R	C3K	C3M	C3V		X3L	X3F	X3R	
C4L	C4F	C4R	C4K	C4M	C4V	C4G	X4L	X4F	X4R	X4M
C5L	C5F	C5R	C5K	C5M	C5V	C5G	X5L	X5F	X5R	X5M

17 Grades of Flyings

6 Grades of Mixed Group 7 Grades of Nondescript 1 Grade of Scrap

M3F	M3R	N1L	N1F	N1R	N1G	S
M4F	M4R	N2L		N2R	N2G	
M5F	M5R					

Special factors "W"¹ and "U"² may be applied to all grades. Tobacco not covered by the standard grades is designated as No-G.

¹—Unsafe order—Sound but containing excessive moisture which is likely to damage unless unusual precaution is taken.

² U—Unsound—Damaged under 20 percent.

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