

Sunmaster Polyethylene Greenhouse Coverings

What you need to know about this product and how growers really feel about it.

By Neda Simeonova

When it comes to selecting greenhouse polyethylene films, growers pay most attention to the combination of toughness, lifespan and optional features, such as light transmission, thermic effect, anti-dripping, anti-fogging and other useful characteristics that will ensure plant protection, growth and productivity. The Sunmaster polyethylene greenhouse coverings from Agro Dynamics, Coppel, Texas, are tri-layered greenhouse films manufactured by Plastica Kritis, Iraklion-Crete, Greece. According to Agro Dynamics, the Sunmaster films are manufactured with all of the above characteristics in mind and offered at a competitive price.

To help you choose greenhouse films that meet all of your specific needs, we asked several growers to evaluate their experiences with Sunmaster films.

FEATURES

Light Transmission. High light transmission is absolutely essential to plant growth. George Raffoul, vice president of Sunquest Farms, Kingsville, ON, Canada, said, "The Sunmaster has really good light transmission. The clarity, the IR ratings, it is a really nice plastic." Sunquest Farms covered four acres with 6 mil, high light transmission, long-life film in October 2003. "We grow tomatoes and peppers, and the crops have responded really well in terms of light transmission," Raffoul added.

Anti-condensation. Sunmaster tri-layered films offer long-lasting anti-condensate (AC) and UV protection. The anti-dripping films eliminate droplets and instead divert water

down the sides of the greenhouse in rivulets, which results in a better quality crop, fewer diseases, a reduced need for pesticides and other benefits. "We've been happy with the anti-condensate of the plastic," Raffoul said. "And actually, we have a hoop-style greenhouse instead of the gothic style, which typically has more problems with condensation. But this plastic responded very well to it and has been handling the condensation."

Thermic effect. Also available are thermic films, containing a combination of EVA and infra-red additives, which absorb infra-red radiation and reduce heat loss throughout the night. This gives growers the advantage of reduced energy consumption for heating as well as smoother temperature drops and higher night temperatures overall, resulting in a better quality crop.

Dan Cacciavillani, owner of Cacciavillani D Farms, Leamington ON, Canada, said, "We went with the Sunmaster EVA type plastic because of the insulation factor. The greenhouse seems to retain heat much better than with the plastic we had here before. We can see a definite improvement — I would estimate probably between a 10- and 15-percent savings on energy." Cacciavillani D Farms purchased the 8 mil type plastic and covered approximately 100,000 sq.ft. in August 2003, and they are pretty happy with it. "The AC technology is probably as good as anything that you would find in the industry," Cacciavillani explained. "Dripping on the crops has been minimal, and I think we've got some good light."

DURABILITY

Sunmaster is very durable, and the film lifetime is guaranteed for a



period of 1-5 seasons, depending on the type of film and area of use. "We found that the film is very strong, and it seems to resist ice damage very well. All in all we are quite pleased with the film for our first fall and winter," Cacciavillani explained.

INSTALLATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

According to Chip Koblegard, owner of Rw Koblegard & Mascot Farms, Okeechobee, Fla., the installation was easy. "It was easy to unfold, and the release agent was good but wasn't too slippery," Koblegard added. Rw Koblegard & Mascot Farms installed a 6 mil film less than one year ago and according to Koblegard, Agro Dynamics was very easy to work with and gave them a four-year guarantee. "They are very competitive (with

price), and I was willing to try it," Koblegard said. "I did get a good price on it, and put it up to try it. If it makes it another two years, I'd be very pleased."

FINAL WORD

Overall, the Sunmaster tri-layered greenhouse films live up to their reputation as "durable and long-lasting anti-condensate films with UV protection." And according to Cacciavillani, the check list for films that growers are generally looking for is: "AC technology, good light transmission and resistance to damage, and the Sunmaster seems to perform quite well." **GPN**

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