

## **Pepper Sympathy RZ**

Because the fruit size of a pepper variety is particularly important in Canada, a method of cultivation is sought which would make Sympathy RZ produce even larger peppers than it already does, without of course running the risk of inviting fusarium. Especially the weak growers are often much more susceptible to fusarium than the strong growers.

Going back in time and looking at Mazurka, we see here a growing method which would suit Sympathy RZ perfectly for producing larger fruits without any problems.

So here it is.

We start planting in a period when it is dark. Add to this the facts that we want to use as little energy as possible and that there is a screen above the young crop. This creates a weakness, which may manifest itself later on in an outbreak of botrytis or, worse still, fusarium. Building in strength can prevent this as the crop grows and can be achieved by not having the pipe temperature too high (the temperature set point should be dependent on the light) and adding nutrients (EC).

When it is freezing and a fairly high pipe temperature is called for we often get the strongest crop. But if the weather is dark and mild, the opposite is true. During dark, mild weather the EC becomes very important. In that case the EC in the slab may be allowed to rise to 4.0 – 4.5 and the EC in the water to 3.2 – 3.5. Such a high EC gives an extra stimulus to the first fruit set, but is at the expense of size. It is important, therefore, to make sure that the EC in the slab drops quickly after the first fruit set. Do this by watering more frequently, but with the EC preferably not below 3.0.

Temperature plays an important role, of course, when it comes to attaining fruit size, i.e. using a sizeable day/night differential is the key. Especially using a pre-midnight decrease in temperature is a must. When afternoon turns into evening, the humidity in the glasshouse rises and the temperature drops, which makes the fruits continue to swell. Because Sympathy RZ is strong against russetting and splitting this is not a problem.

In the Netherlands we have nurseries with Sympathy RZ (trials) using the 2-, 3- and 4-stem system and everything is going well on all these nurseries. Stem distance also comes into it, of course: 6.5 stems per square metre often results in larger fruits than 7.5 stems per square metre. Naturally, it also depends on the glasshouse type in which a crop is grown and CO<sub>2</sub> also plays an important role in all this.

When the first aim is to create sufficient crop mass and achieve a first fruit set which is not too enormous, you will have a strong crop which can cope easily with high doses of CO<sub>2</sub> to increase fruit size. The thinner a crop is by summer, the more difficult it will become to dose CO<sub>2</sub> and the smaller the fruits will be.

### **Technical information**

Rijk Zwaan / TerraLink Horticulture cannot be held responsible or liable for any cultural information provided. It is to be used as a guide only, as climatic conditions and conditions outside the control of the Company can affect the cultivation of all crops.

The following cultural tips are based on experiences on Dutch and Belgian nurseries.