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-of-

J. N. PEALE



HOW TO GROW ALFALFA

Agricultural Experiment Station Makes Some Suggestions on Seeding and Harvesting.

It is no easy matter when discussing any farm subject, to couch it in such language as to apply to the whole state of Nebraska, which has such a great variety of soil and climatic conditions, with difference of altitude and rainfall in the eastern and western parts of the state, that the proper application in one section of the state does not, often in fact, produce satisfactory results in another.

Alfalfa is fast becoming one of the valuable crops of our state, many believe that it solves the problem for the maintenance of a dense population in the future Nebraska, as the conditions of its growth are here ideal. By consulting the report of the Bureau of Statistics we find that the total number of tons grown in 1904 was 744,420 which in 1908 was increased to 1,846,703 or more than 248 per cent. Mr. Hall says: "It is no longer necessary to argue the question with the Nebraska farmer, as to the feeding value of alfalfa, for its merits in this regard are admitted by all. Neither will it be necessary to use any argument with the up-to-date farmer in convincing him of the value of this crop in helping to maintain the fertility of the soil, as nearly every community in which alfalfa has been grown for any length of time has furnished a practical demonstration of the value of raising potatoes, or corn, following the plowing under of the alfalfa. Both of these questions have been so thoroughly settled in the school of actual experience that no argument will make the proof stronger. The only question then to be settled is, how can we in the easiest and surest way, come in possession of this valuable plant."

First in importance is the procuring good home grown seed. We do not hesitate to say that more farmers have been discouraged and deterred from growing alfalfa from having sown seed grown in Utah, or New Mexico, or some place too far south, and where it was grown under irrigation. This seed looks much finer than the home grown, and will grow all right, but the first winter will kill a large per cent of it. Then, if the experiment is being tried in a section where alfalfa is little grown, the man is ready to blame it to his soil, or climatic conditions, or anything but the real cause, which was seed unclimatised.

The time of seeding will depend on the part of the state you live in. From the center of the state west, we would advise spring seeding, as a general proposition; and in the eastern half, fall seeding. If spring seeding is desired, then we should prefer that the land should have been in corn the previous year and well tilled. Then commence in the spring as soon as the ground is in condition to work well, and thoroughly disc the land, lapping the disc one-half. Then as often as it rains and packs the ground, or if the weeds start, either harrow, or disc again. Keep up this cultivation until the first to fifteenth of June. You will by this means have sprouted and destroyed a large part of the weeds and conserved the moisture, and prepared the land in fine physical condition to receive the seed. Sow twenty pounds per acre. The seed may be sown with a broadcast seeder, by hand, or may be drilled in; whatever the method, extreme care should be exercised to distribute the seed evenly and not to cover it too deeply. One objection in using the drill is that the seed is usually put in too deep, and comes up poorly. The wheel-barrow grass seeder

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In operation this wonderful invention is simplicity itself. You simply prepare the food to be cooked in the regular way—place it on the stove and bring it to boil—then immediately transfer to the Cooker, cover it tightly, add the insulated pillow covering, drop the lid and let the Cooker do the rest. In an hour or two remove the cover and serve the meal boiling hot—perfectly cooked and with a taste that will prove delightfully surprising.

For cereals that require long cooking, as oatmeal, it will prove a revelation—prepare the oatmeal at night before retiring, bring it to a boil—place it in the Cooker, leave it there all night. In the morning, on arising, your breakfast is ready to be served— piping hot and deliciously cooked.

Instead of cooking beans, rice, barley, peas and other foodstuffs over a hot fire, which takes hours and hours—and fuel—simply bring your water to a boil, place it in the Cooker and that ends it.

It saves time and fuel—it is clean and sanitary, takes up very little room and is elegant in appearance. Our cooker is scientifically built. The outer case is made from a select hardwood, beautifully finished. The inside is lined with mineral wool and asbestos—and is covered with zinc. Two boilers are made of the very best quality blue and white enameled ware. The insulating pillow covers are strongly made and guaranteed sanitary.

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THE HARNESS MEN

is one of the best implements for the purpose.

Thoroughly harrow, and you will have no more trouble to get a stand of alfalfa, than of wheat or oats.

If fall seeding is desired, then the land should be sown to small grain the year you intend to seed to alfalfa. When cutting the grain you should follow the harrow with the disc, as this will conserve the moisture, and put the land in shape to plow later on. We do not think it best to plow very deep, but thoroughly turn and pulverize the soil. This can be done by using an extra horse in your team, attaching one section of the harrow behind the plow, which harrows each furrow two or three times, fining and firming the soil, leaving it in excellent condition for seeding. Some farmers say not to be in a hurry and seed unless there is plenty of moisture, but we believe it advisable to sow and harrow at once, not waiting for moisture, for when the seed is properly in the ground it will come up after the first rain. Try to sow in August. Seeding after September 1st will not make as vigorous a growth during the fall as the earlier seeding and is more apt to be winter killed, and is likely to keep you home from the State Fair which occurs this year, September 6th to 10th.

In spring sown alfalfa it is usually necessary to mow the weeds once or twice the first year; in doing so, be careful not to set the sickle bar too low, but leave some of the leaves on the plant, or you will kill a number of the plants.

A light top dressing of well rotted stable manure, about 10 loads per acre, will be a great factor in aiding to start alfalfa, in fact we would strongly urge that all land sown to alfalfa be well manured prior to its preparation.

Alfalfa should be cut as soon as the first bloom begins to appear, for at that stage there is less woody fibre to the stem, hence less waste. The greatest difficulty in eastern Nebraska, in the handling of alfalfa, when

cut, is to get it up without discoloring. A method of handling the crop which has given good satisfaction to a number of our farmers, is to cut the alfalfa in the morning as soon as the dew is off, allow it to remain in the swath as late in the afternoon as possible and yet get it raked before the evening dews begin to fall, and then put it in tall cocks, if it looks like rain, otherwise leave it in the winrow over night. If the next day is sunny, the hay is scattered after the dew is off, allowed to dry until late afternoon, and put in stack or barn. This method of handling insures a bright, green color so desirable in the merchantable article. Care must be exercised however, as hay put in the barn or stack when only partially cured is likely to mould or char and be dusty, so as to make it practically unsalable, and in some cases sufficient heat is generated to ignite.

Immediately after taking the hay from the field, thoroughly disc the field with a harrow tooth disc if you have or can get one, and if not, with an ordinary disc well weighted and set nearly straight. This will give the ground a cultivation, kill weeds, sand burrs and grass and not injure alfalfa if more than one year old. Do not cultivate the first year.

Save the second crop for seed. The fields in western Nebraska are very favorably located for a seed crop and oftentimes such a crop is very profitable. We do not think it profitable to pasture alfalfa except with hogs. When hogs are pastured, feed but a small ration of grain twice a day. Do not feed work horses too much; however, a limited feed of alfalfa is good for them. If a horse is given all he will eat he will eat too much, but there is no better hay to feed to young colts or milch cows.

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