

# PROGRESSIVE FARMER

THE INDUSTRIAL AND EDUCATIONAL INTERESTS OF OUR PEOPLE PARAMOUNT TO ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS OF STATE POLICY.

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THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER is the Official Organ of the North Carolina Farmers' State Alliance.

## FARM AFFAIRS.

### BROOM CORN—A WORD OF CAUTION.

We alluded last week to the statement of a gentleman that broom corn can be profitably grown at half present prices. Mr. W. S. Goodin does not think so and in the article given below gives his reasons for the faith that is in him. Many North Carolina farmers have grown broom corn. We should like to have reports from some of them for publication in The Progressive Farmer. Mr. Goodin says:

I read an article in a recent issue entitled "Broom Corn," which I believe will cause many persons, not acquainted with the culture of broom corn, to embark in the business of growing same, to their sorrow. I will not dispute what he has said about the yield per acre, but will say that I have been familiar with culture of broom corn for more than twenty years, and have never known any one to raise crops that would begin to approach such yields as he states may be obtained. The largest yields that I ever knew, or heard of, was one ton per three acres, and have only known three men in twenty years who succeeded so well, and that was on rich virgin soil which had been in blue grass pasture. And the next best yields that I ever knew or heard of, was one ton per four acres, and that was considered an exceptional yield. Generally one ton can be obtained from five to six acres, and that is regarded as a good crop; often it takes seven or eight acres to make a ton; in such case it is entirely unprofitable. It is a crop that withstands the drought, but is easily affected by the chinch bugs, and requires the utmost care in harvesting and preparing for market. A few days' delay at harvest time means the loss of crop, and if shedded in a tight barn may cause it to heat and spoil, and under a leaking roof means damage if not ruin. At heading out time, if the brush promise to be very long and fine, a rain will often cause it to drop over to one side and grow crooked, which diminishes its value one-half. As to method of handling, it would require more time than I now have, to write about it. One point I will make. We don't use hand scrapers. We have horse power scrapers. We have horse power seeders which will seed from one to two tons per day when properly handled.

Now, Mr. Editor, I have written this article hurriedly, for the sole reason to set this question right before your readers, hoping none of them may be deluded into belief that they can raise one ton of broom corn per acre. In conclusion, I would say to persons not familiar with the culture of broom corn, I should not advise any inexperienced persons to engage in it this year, for the following reasons: 1st, Because I believe that the high price which prevailed last year, will be such an incentive as to cause thousands to plant, expecting to receive the same price. 2d, because it is a crop of limited consumption, 35,000 or 36,000 tons supplies the world, and in the broom corn belt of Illinois, which consists of some three or four counties, they claim that they can produce four fifths of the required amount, and they generally do. 3rd, because this will be a presidential election year, and broom corn, like other commodities, will feel the effects of the monetary stringency which will surely come as the election approaches.

## HOW SHALL WE DETERMINE WHAT OUR SOIL REQUIRES IN A FERTILIZER?

An All Important Question Discussed by an Authority.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer. In setting out to answer this most important question, there are several points which must be taken into consideration. First, the character of the soil; second, its previous treatment; third, what the crops demonstrate, which are, or have been growing on the land; and fourth, what the crops require which we intend to grow.

No chemical analysis of the soil can be depended upon to tell us what element of plant food is most necessary to make our land productive. For the element least in evidence, may be the most available; and the element which the analysis shows our soil to contain the most of, may be so locked up and insoluble that the plants are able to obtain only a small portion of it. The most practical way is to go to the field with our question, and seek the answer from soil and plant.

Of course the surest way to get at this matter is through a series of experiments where the different elements of plant food are applied separately and together, in different combinations to different plots of ground.

I am aware, however, that most farmers will not take the trouble to experiment in this way; also that the land varies so greatly on most farms that one set of experiments could not be made to apply to the whole place.

Taking up first, the character of the soil. For eight years the writer cultivated an orange grove and peach orchard together with vegetables, on sandy land in Florida, and we found that the quantity and quality of our fruit was increased and improved more by a liberal application of potash—using it principally in the form of sulphate—than from any other element of plant food; although phosphoric acid was also necessary to make good, firm wood, and nitrogen to stimulate growth in the spring. On our Georgia farm we have almost every variety of soil from stiff, red clay to light, sandy bottom land, and we find that the rule holds good here also, and an increased use of potash is necessary on the sandy and muck bottom land; while our red clay uplands seem fairly well supplied with this element, and only a moderate quantity is necessary in a fertilizer. Here an increased use of phosphoric acid and nitrogen gave the best results.

The previous treatment of the soil is also very important in forming a correct decision as to what our land requires in a fertilizer. Lands which have been subject to continuous clean culture for many years like most of the cotton lands of the South, are very deficient in organic matter, and consequently are lacking in nitrogen. They may contain large quantities of the other elements of plant food, but these have become mostly insoluble for want of the decaying vegetable matter which helps to make them available. The first thing necessary on such lands is to supply humus by some means, preferably by growing and turning under cow peas.

On the other hand, if the soil be filled with organic matter from applications of stable manure, or otherwise, we may judge that such soil is fairly well supplied, unless the plants tell us otherwise, with all the elements of plant food. Here we should use an evenly balanced fertilizer, and use it heavily, on some good money crop. For, strange as it may seem, the richer the land, the better it will pay to use heavy applications of commercial fertilizers, especially if the crop to be grown be vegetables or berries.

We can tell pretty correctly the needs of our soil by noting the appearance and yield of growing crops, especially with small grain, like wheat or oats. If the plants come up with a good dark green color, and grow off vigorously, we may know that our soil contains a good supply of nitrogen. If they look yellow and sickly, it shows this element of plant food is lacking. Cow peas and clover will do well with a small amount of nitrogen, as they can procure it from the atmosphere. And where they refuse to flourish, potash is needed. If our cotton makes a great deal of weed, with but little fruit, we may know that the supply of phosphoric acid in our soil is short. The same is also true where wheat or corn makes fine straw and stalk with but little grain. Where our Irish potatoes

are few in number, and watery in character, while they have good top, potash is deficient. Also where our turnips are mostly top with little root, the same is the case.

Bearing these facts in mind, with close observation we may arrive at a pretty fair idea of the requirements of our soil. Then, by combining this knowledge with the knowledge of what the crop we wish to grow will remove from the soil, we may judge pretty accurately what our fertilizers should contain to produce the best results on our soil.

F. J. MERRIAM, Battle Hill, Ga.

## IMPROVING RUN-DOWN FARMS.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

The number of run-down farms are increasing in this country at a rapid rate, and the West will soon have its share of these farms along with the East. The cause of this is that there are so many engaged in farming who do not understand the primary principles of good farming that the land deteriorates without attracting their attention. This deterioration goes on slowly and gradually, and year by year the soil produces a smaller crop. After matters become considerably demoralized somebody wakes up to the fact that the land is exhausted and run-down, and the farm gets a name that practically makes it unsalable. Good money that was originally put in the land as an investment is thus lost. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are lost in this country through this deterioration of soil because of ignorance or neglect on the part of so-called farmers. In the same way, I suppose, a similar depreciation of other business property goes on in towns and villages through lack of good management. The farmers are not alone in having among their number poor members who fail to hold their own and keep their property from degenerating. It is the price that incapacity or shiftlessness must pay.

A good farm needs as much systematic attention as any business or city property. In order to keep up its renting or paying value the soil must not be allowed to degenerate or its buildings and other appurtenances to go to pieces. A good farmer will not allow this. The fertility of his soil is never sacrificed for some immediate gain unless it is restored right away again by some return. Continual cropping without adding anything in return is never practiced. But the most difficult thing in farming is to take hold of a run down farm and restore it to its former standard of fertility. This is discouraging work and often drives the best of farmers to despair. It is like taking hold of a run down business in a city and trying to build it up. Business men say that it is easier to start an entirely new business than to attempt to inject new life into one that has been run into the ground. So it is much more satisfactory to take a farm that is in fair condition and run it than to purchase a run down one at half the price and strive to improve it. But the latter can be done, and there are cases where it is necessary for a farmer to do this. To do this he must make up his mind to make haste slowly, and to make every step that he takes a progressive one. Grass must be made the foundation crop of the land and green and barnyard manure must be continually added every year in excess of the amount taken from the soil. By a proper crop rotation, plenty of animals which can add fertility to the soil, the farm can in the course of years be returned to its first fertile condition. A man who can do this, however, is a farmer who is capable of making anything on the farm succeed. The long course of discipline he must go through will also prove of help to him because he will learn more about intensive farming than the man who starts with a rich soil.

C. W. JONES

Common barrel salt placed in a trough is preferable to rock salt for cows.

Do you know of any farmer who has a mania for buying old stuff at auction? I do. Old wagons, bobsleds, grindstones, corn shellers, worn out saws, and whole boxes of scrap iron, that never will be used in the world, are thus bought and lugged home by men who wouldn't touch the stuff at private sale, at half the figures they now cheerfully pay. Why is this, I wonder?—E. L. Vincent.

## TOBACCO DEPARTMENT.

### THE JORDAN PLAN FULLY EXPLAINED.

Mr. Groome Declares Organization the Only Salvation of Tobacco Growers and the Jordan Plan the Only Practicable Plan of Organization and Cooperation.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer. To Tobacco Growers, Warehousemen, Leaf Dealers and Tobacco Manufacturers:

The following paper prepared by Mr. W. J. Groome is such a clear and concise exposition of the merits and workings of the "Jordan plan" as adopted by the Tobacco Growers' Association at its meeting in Raleigh January 17th, 1900, that I heartily commend its careful and thoughtful perusal to all tobacco growers, dealers or manufacturers and to all interested in restoring the price of leaf tobacco to a living basis. All papers in tobacco districts of North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee and South Carolina are requested to publish this article. The county organizations are asked to see that copies of papers containing this discussion of the "Jordan plan" are distributed among the growers of their counties. The immediate formation of county associations is urged in these counties which have failed to organize; and it is hoped that every county in the tobacco growing districts of the States above mentioned will perfect organizations at once. All county associations are requested to send list of officers and account of proceedings, etc., to Mr. T. B. Parker, Secretary North Carolina Tobacco Growers' Association, Hillsboro N. C.

J. BRYAN GRIMES, Pres't N. C. Tobacco Growers' Association.

During the past ten years the price of leaf tobacco has declined year by year, until at the present time the prices paid for the different grades are only about one third of what they were in 1889, while under existing conditions the future does not hold out any prospects that encourage the grower. At the present time the money received for his crop by the grower is barely sufficient to pay the cost of the fertilizer and the labor expended, and there is no profit. This is not as it should be and the time has come for the producer to have something to say regarding the returns he shall receive for his hard labor. There is a way by which he can bring about a state of affairs in which he will be called into consultation when prices are made on his property—a state of affairs in which he whose intelligence, labor and skill causes the earth to yield bountifully of its fruits will reap a full and just reward for his efforts.

Such a state of affairs can be brought about by organization. The old adage, "In union there is strength," is just as applicable to the farmer as to any other class of men. There are trades unions almost without number in our country; there are unions in the various lines of business; the railroads and other transportation companies have their understandings; almost every trade and line of business in the land is organized for the purposes of advancement or mutual protection, or both. The farmer is the foundation of the whole social fabric. Without his efforts our kings of finance would be beggars, though possessing untold gold and our ship of state would go to pieces in a twinkling. Without his efforts it would not be possible to dig into the bowels of the earth for the treasure hidden there, nor could we extend our civilization to the remote parts of the world. Without the farmer there would be no wealth, no government and no civilization. Yet he, upon whose toil everything depends, has been content to labor for such recompense as others have seen fit to grudgingly bestow him. That recompense in the case of the tobacco grower at least, has been growing smaller and smaller as the years have gone by, until now he is actually working for his board and clothes, and unless he wakes up and asserts himself soon he will be starved to death on the land his forefathers subdued and prospered on and left as a heritage to him.

The farmer might be a power if he would, and the way to secure recognition of his merits and his rights lies through organization—organization as thorough and as full of purpose as that of any of the great combinations which

now all but control our luxuries, our necessities and our government. The single farmer is but a man, with but one man's influence; the farmers of the country united in a definite purpose can make their influence felt from one end to the other of this broad land, and compel the payment of such a scale of prices for their products as will give them their full share of the good things of life and enable them to maintain their families in comfort and educate their children.

The plan outlined below is put forward as a solution of the difficulties which now beset the tobacco grower. It does not attempt to go much into details, as these are matters which must be agreed upon and fixed by representatives chosen for that purpose, and it is wholly within the province of such representatives to change any feature of the plan, as in their judgment may seem best.

When the farmers of the bright tobacco section have perfected their permanent organizations and have agreed to combine with those who have come forward and volunteered to furnish the money for the purpose of controlling, handling and dealing in tobacco grown in this section, it is proposed that a large board, composed of as many tobacco growers from all over the tobacco raising districts as the farmers themselves see fit to appoint to represent them, shall meet a board of equal number appointed by the parties who are to furnish the necessary capital. It will be the duty of this joint board to mutually agree upon all the details of the plans for organization and management of the company to be formed; to prepare an agreement to be signed by individual growers which binds them to sell their product to the company for the ensuing five years, and to fix the price the company is to pay during the business of the first year on each grade of tobacco, which price shall not be less than 15 per cent. more than the average price paid for corresponding grades during the last five years.

The plan contemplates that 90 per cent. of the tobacco growers of the "bright belt" of North and South Carolina, Virginia and eastern Tennessee, or enough of such growers as will control 90 per cent. of the tobacco raised in these districts, shall pledge themselves to sell all of their crop during the next five years to a company to be formed by and composed of tobacco growers, leaf dealers, warehousemen, manufacturers and others. The company shall be sufficiently strong financially to buy up, and hold if necessary, the entire crop of tobacco grown in the district referred to during the next five years; and if deemed best for the interests of all concerned, to lease, buy or erect, equip and operate factories, warehouses and plants for the curing, storage or manufacture of tobacco in any or all of its various forms.

It is proposed that the grower shall take stock in the company to the amount of 15 per cent. of the value of his crop, or more if he sees fit. He is to have the privilege of paying for his stock either in cash or tobacco at his option. Whether his stock is paid for in cash or tobacco, it will stand on the identical footing with all other stock and will participate in all profits, whether arising from sales or manufacture.

The business of the company shall be managed by a board of directors, a majority of whom shall be growers.

For the purpose of fixing prices on the different grades of tobacco, a board or committee, consisting of as many growers from all over the tobacco raising districts as the growers holding stock in the company see fit to appoint to represent them, shall meet a like board appointed by the stockholders who furnish the capital. This joint board shall meet annually and fix the price to be paid during the ensuing year for each grade of tobacco. It is confidently expected that each year will bring an increased price, but the prices of the different grades for the first year's business shall not be less than 15 per cent. more than the average price of corresponding grades during the past five years.

It will be the policy to arrange with warehousemen, leaf dealers, manufacturers and others having facilities for handling, curing and working tobacco on the different markets to handle, cure and care for tobacco owned by this company, for which they will receive a commission. It is the intention

to benefit all tobacco men and to cut out none.

The grower will take his tobacco to the warehouse, where it will be weighed, ticketed and placed on the floor by the warehousemen. Each separate pile of tobacco will have a different number, which will be marked on the ticket and on the warehouse book opposite the owner's name. The owner's name will not appear on the ticket. There will be no auction, but a grading committee consisting of two growers and two expert tobacco men will inspect each pile and mark its grade on the ticket. These graders will not know to whom the tobacco belongs and no partiality can be shown. As soon as the tobacco is graded the owner will receive his money.

After the tobacco is graded it is put in the hands of the leaf dealers, who will re-order and pack it away in hogsheads marked as to weight and grade and turn it over to the company, which can then store it or sell to manufacturers or the export trade. The company will be in a position to help the independent factories and enable them to resume business on a profitable basis. This is one of the aims of the proposed organization.

The whole design of the proposed plan is to help the farmer, the warehouseman, the leaf dealer and the small manufacturer, and make the business of each a profitable one; to restore prices on the raw material and keep them where all can reap the full reward of their labor. The success of the plan means a full and just remuneration for labor, time and capital employed, and a larger share of this earth's blessings for all engaged in the growth, handling, manipulation and manufacture of tobacco. The company will be one largely composed of tobacco growers and dealers in that product and will work for the interests of all concerned. The profits arising from the business will be equitably divided among the stockholders and the farmer's one share of stock will share in all benefits equally with that of any one else.

Can you do better than to cast your lot with this organization? You have everything to gain and nothing to lose by so doing. You do not risk one single dollar but are assured higher prices for what you produce. You are guaranteed an advance of not less than 15 per cent., not on the price tobacco brings to day, but on the average price it has sold for during the past five years. Is not this worth having? And is not this proposition, made in good faith, worthy of favorable consideration on your part?

Among the remedies proposed for bettering the condition of the tobacco grower and the destruction of the trusts are the boycott and the co-operative factory. It is confidently urged that these two measures will correct the evils. The boycott will not work effectually because the consumer does not care one red cent who manufactures the tobacco he uses. He seldom knows or inquires anything about it. He wants all he can get for his money of what he considers the best, no matter who made it or where it came from. If the bulk of the manufactured articles was consumed by the grower or his immediate friends, the boycott might be a powerful argument. But the fact is only a very small percentage of the manufactured tobacco is consumed at home, while the great bulk goes to other sections of this country and to other countries where no tobacco is raised and whose people have troubles of their own and know nothing of the tobacco grower or the conditions under which he labors. You do not care a straw who manufactures the sugar you use for sweetening your coffee, or the cotton goods of which your shirt is made. What does interest you is the amount you can get for your dollar, and you buy where you can get the most value for your money. Can you reasonably expect the tobacco consumer to do differently? The co-operative factory is all right if endowed with sufficient capital and brains. But unless it possesses both qualifications in an eminent degree it cannot succeed. If the co-operative factory is started on a small scale, as probably most of its adherents propose, it will no doubt be allowed to flourish awhile until it has developed some business and got some brands of its manufacture fairly well established, when the trust will swoop down into its territory with other brands equally

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 8]