

# THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER

and The Cotton Plant.

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## ALFALFA AGAIN.

Mr. Parker Answers Further Inquiries as to the Successful Growing of This Important Crop.

The many letters received since my article on alfalfa was published in The Progressive Farmer in November indicate the widespread interest in new and promising crops that naturally belong to a progressive people.

Since writing the article referred to, I have read letters from all sections of the Union and have seen nothing that detracts from the high opinion that I had formed of this wonderful plant.

However, there is one suggestion, and that is: it will be well for each person who contemplates trying alfalfa, if none has been grown in that particular vicinity, or if the experimenter is not to some extent familiar with it, to experiment with it in a small way rather than plant largely until he finds out whether or not his lands are adapted to it. Observation and experiment show that all lands are not equally adapted to its best growth, and it may be possible that certain lands cannot be made to grow it profitably; hence the importance of trying it at first on a small scale.

### You Must Inoculate Land or Seed.

Again, I think it will be money thrown away to plant it without first inoculating the soil, or the seed before sowing, with the necessary bacteria. There are two ways in which this can be done. The first is by procuring soil from a field that has grown successfully alfalfa for some years, and spreading on the land to be planted. This should be done on a cloudy day so the action of the sun will not kill the bacteria before it can be harrowed into the land. The second and least expensive plan is to procure the bacteria culture and inoculate the seed before sowing them. The process is so simple that any one who can read plain instructions can make the required inoculation. This bacteria has been obtainable from the Agricultural Department at Washington, free of cost, for experimental purposes, but a letter just received from that Department announces that no more will be available this spring, except to those who have previously applied. Persons wishing to experiment with the bacteria this fall can make application to the Department after July 1st,

stating what crops they wish to experiment with.

However, this bacteria has been put on the market by reliable persons who are making it for commercial purposes, and can be bought for \$2 per package—enough to inoculate seed for one acre.

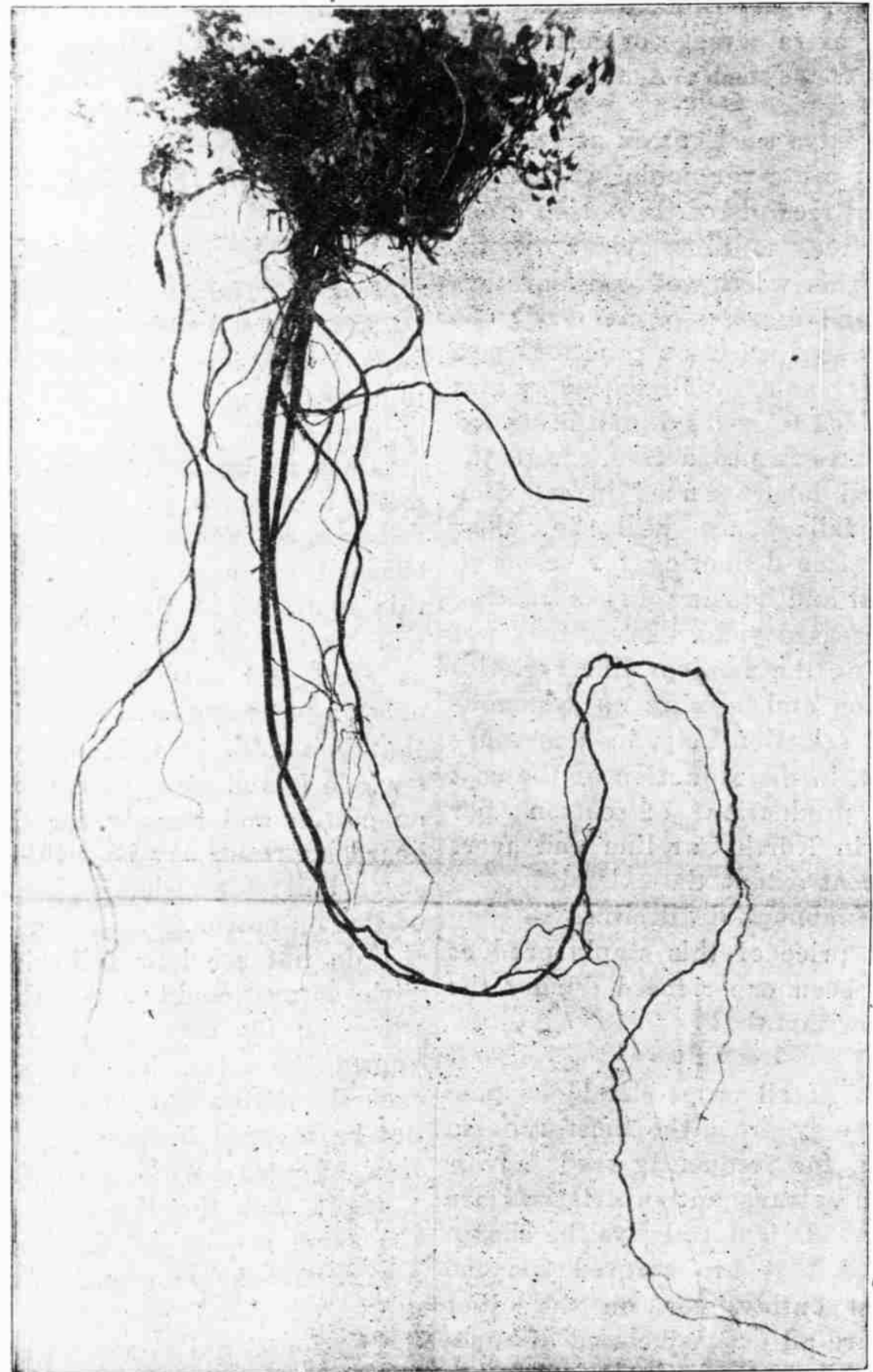
This culture can be had for inoculating clover, peas, beans, vetch, etc., at the same price, but most of our Southern soils already have the necessary bacteria for some of these crops, therefore it would be useless to buy it for any crop that already grows successfully on land intended to be planted. Again, this bacteria is intended only for the crops mentioned, and not for other crops. That is, it would be useless to apply it to corn, cotton, wheat, the grasses, other than the clovers, or any crop except the leguminous crops. But for any of them it is indispensable where the land already contains the bacteria.

### Use Stable Manure.

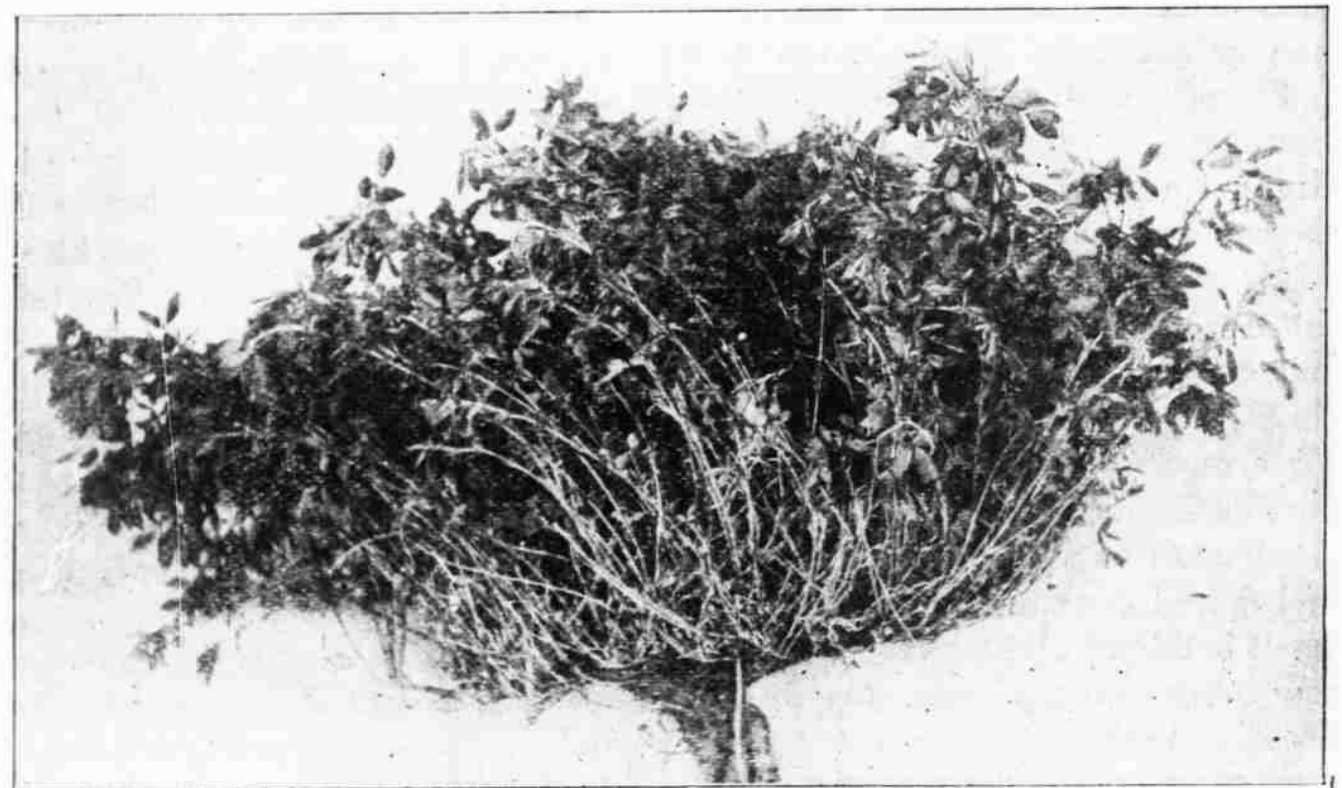
Another suggestion at this point, and that is, put stable manure on the land where possible. I know there is a well-grounded, to some extent, prejudice against using stable manure with this crop on account of infesting the land with grass seeds, especially manure from horses fed on hay, and particularly crab grass hay, but I firmly believe the benefits to be derived from such manuring will far outweigh any bad results from grass seeds. I cannot better express the importance of stable manure than to quote from the March number of the Southern Planter. The editor, in writing about manure that had been exposed to the weather and had lost much of its fertilizing properties by leaching, says: "In point of fact such manure has lost the greatest part of its fertilizing elements by the leaching of its soluble salts and the loss of its nitrogen by fermentation, still the mechanical and physical improvement it makes in the land renders it valuable. Its chief worth, however, depends upon the presence of bacteria, which it holds in great numbers. These are of two kinds, one operating near the surface because they can only work in the pres-

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## HOW ALFALFA GROWS.



Alfalfa plant, taken June 11th. Root nine feet and nine inches in length; 150 stalks. This plant was nine years old, and grew in high upland having a stiff hard-pan subsoil; water 180 feet below surface. In digging, after the first foot of soil was taken away, a pick had to be used the entire depth. (Cut loaned by Kansas Agricultural College.)



Alfalfa plant having 312 stalks from one root. Taken May 6th; growing in high upland, stiff hard-pan subsoil, 180 feet to water. Plant ten inches high; eight years old. (Cut loaned by Kansas Agricultural College.)