

# THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER

## AND SOUTHERN FARM GAZETTE

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## Rational Ways of Reducing Your Fertilizer Bill.

**T**HERE is much talk this spring about reducing the amount of fertilizers used on the crop as well as the acreage planted to cotton, and farmers in some sections are being asked, we understand, to pledge themselves to use only so much fertilizer per acre on their cotton.

Now, The Progressive Farmer believes that Southern farmers are spending for fertilizers each year several millions of dollars which they could save; but we do not believe that any such scheme of reduction as this is wise. On the contrary we regard it as little less than positively foolish. Reduce the cotton acreage by all means—we have been urging this for years—and then farm each acre planted just as well as possible. This is the only business-like thing to do. What the farmer is interested in is not so much an increase in the price of cotton as an increase in the profits from cotton. To reduce the cotton acreage will increase the profits by increasing the price; but to make a small yield to the acre will almost surely decrease the profits by increasing the cost of production.

We believe, then, in liberal fertilization of all crops on which fertilizers pay a profit; but we also believe that Southern farmers can get much greater returns for a smaller investment in fertilizers than they are now making. It is the purpose of this article briefly to point out three ways in which this can be done.

1. There is no reason why Southern farmers, with the splendid list of summer and winter legumes at their command, should continue to buy nitrogen for their corn and cotton crops. They pay 20 cents a pound for this element in commercial fertilizers when the legumes would take it from the air for them and pay them for the privilege. But they have been so wedded to the "money crop" idea that they have refused to give their legumes a chance to do it. As a correspondent says elsewhere in this issue, the man who uses nitrogen out of the fertilizer bag for staple crops is literally broadcasting nickels. Of course, the quickly available forms of nitrogen will always be needed for special crops and special conditions; but the farmer who has to buy nitrogen to grow a crop of corn or cotton has been doing some poor farming, and if he is not working toward the point where he will not have to buy, he is still doing poor farming.

2. Southern farmers buy each year hundreds of thousands of tons of acid phosphate and other "available" forms of phosphoric acid when a rational system of soil improvement would enable them to get this phosphoric acid in the form of ground phosphate rock for less than half what they now pay. Now, let no man suppose that we advise him to buy ground rock instead of acid phosphate. We do not, unless his soil is richly supplied with humus or unless he is giving it a dressing of stable manure. On the thin, dry, humus-hungry soils the acid phosphate will pay better. But here is the point: The man

who has his land in the condition it should be can get his phosphoric acid in the cheap form; the man whose land lacks vegetable matter must pay twice what he should for his supply of this element.

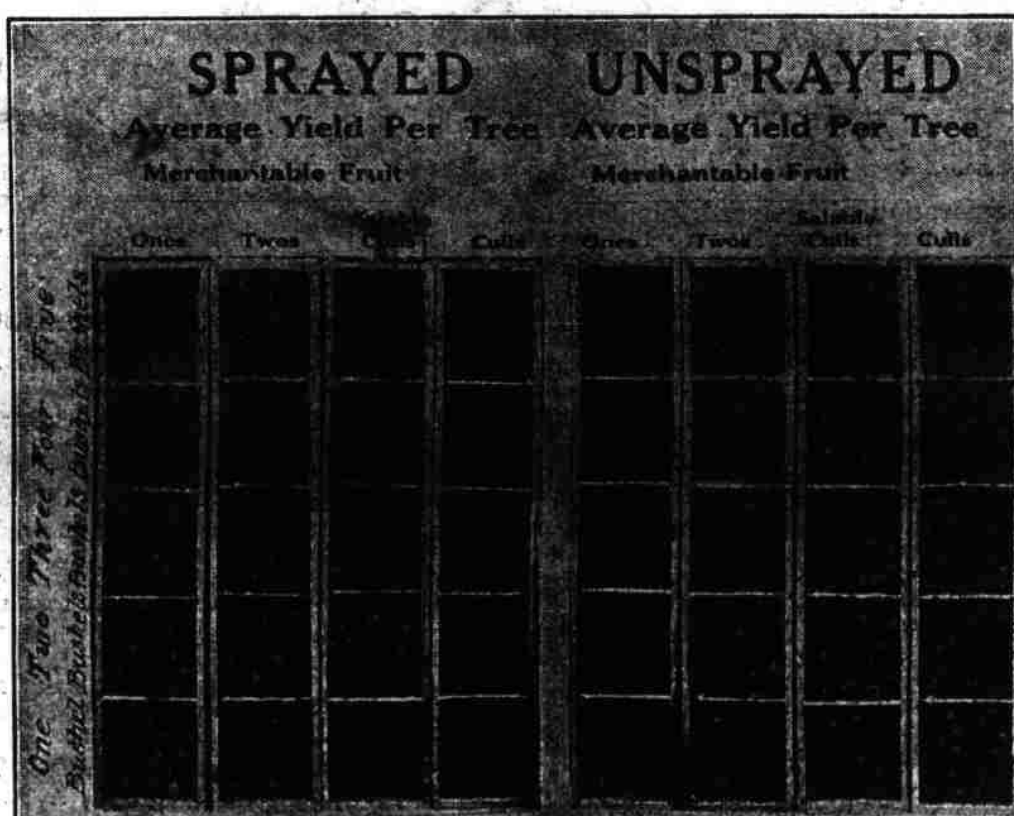
3. Millions of dollars are literally wasted each year in the purchase of an over-supply of one element as compared with the supply

of the others. For example, the farmer on the red-clay soils of the Piedmont or on the alluvial lands of the Mississippi Valley gets almost no increase of most crops for the potash he buys, yet he goes on year after year paying \$1.50 to \$2.50 for potash in every ton of fertilizer he uses. On the sandy soils of the Coastal Plain, more potash is needed for practically every crop than is supplied in any of the mixtures commonly used. On another page a correspondent recommends the use of a high-grade fertilizer—at least 8-5-5—always, and this illustrates the common faith in formulas and the common failure to recognize the fact that the man who wishes to get his money's worth when buying fertilizers must know something of his soil as well as of his crop and the fertilizer. To buy 8-5-5 fertilizer for cotton in some sections would be broadcasting, not nickels, but dollars.

Three ways, then, by which the fertilizer bill of the South could be reduced without at all reducing the yields of any crop are: (1) By growing more

legumes so as to get nitrogen from the air instead of the fertilizer bag; (2) by filling the soil with humus so as to get phosphoric acid in a cheap instead of a high-priced form, and (3) by taking the trouble to find out what elements of plant food are really needed for the crop and then buying these and these only.

### DOES SPRAYING PAY?



We have a great deal to say about spraying in this issue, and lest any reader should conclude it is a small matter, or one of doubtful profit, we wish to show right here just how spraying pays.

This illustration, reproduced by courtesy of the Kansas Experiment Station, shows the average yield of fruit from 76 trees, part of which were sprayed and part left unsprayed.

It seems to us that this picture is a sufficient answer to any question as to whether or not it pays to spray. If other proof is required, read the experiences on page 2 of those who have tried it.

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