

# THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER

## AND SOUTHERN FARM GAZETTE



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## We Must Stop Our Lands From Washing Away.

WHEN a hard rain comes, does it cut your cultivated hill fields full of little gullies? Does muddy water run down these little channels and into the creek or the roadside ditches? Are there a few big gullies cut through to the hard unbroken soil?

Where these things happen, the farmer is losing the best part of his soil and losing it forever. He will have to plow and harrow and fertilize and manure and grow legumes to replace the fertility which the streams are carrying away. The writer has seen, as have most readers, fields so badly damaged by one hard rain that years of work would be required to restore them.

It is evident to the man who thinks, that this process of soil destruction cannot be allowed to continue—certainly not to the extent it has taken place in the past. To let our lands continue to wash away, as the old field shown in the picture is washing, and as thousands of fields all over the South have done, is to prepare for ourselves or for our children a time of hardship beyond anything we have ever known. The time will come, when this land will have to be redeemed and the man who has to redeem such land, and to depend upon it for a living while he does the work, is going to do much hard work for very little pay.

We must stop the washing of our lands—not only the great devouring gullies which bite away whole acres of cultivated land and leave barren wastes in its place, but also the little often-unnoticed channels down which the water runs, carrying with it the best part of the soil. It is no easy task, as anyone who has tried it knows. Perhaps soil-washing will never be entirely stopped, but we must at least reduce it to such a point that our hill lands will get better instead of poorer.

There are many things which will help, but no one thing which may be called a remedy. It is a task for all the years the land is cultivated, not a thing to be done once for all.

Many lands could be saved from washing simply by a judicious rotation of crops with decent plowing and a winter cover. To crop any land at all rolling year after year, until the soil is robbed of all vegetable matter and has become dead and lifeless, is to invite gullies. Terraces will solve the problem in many cases—not weed-grown banks and ugly ditches, but low broad swells of earth, or real terraces one above another.

The hillside ditch may be necessary in some cases. Tile drainage will yet solve the problem for thousands of acres, the writer feels certain. Other thousands which men are now trying to tend will have

to be put into grass or replanted to forest trees. Indeed, when land cannot be held in place by deep plowing, cover crops, the Mangum terrace and proper cultivation, or by good under-drainage, it ought not to be cultivated at all.

On land that is now being cultivated, attention to a few points will do much to prevent or to lessen the damage from surface water. Here are four of them:



NOTE HOW THE SOIL OF THE FIELD IS BEING WASHED DOWN INTO THE OLD ROAD-BED. THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF SUCH OLD FIELDS IN THE SOUTH.

1. Rows should be laid-off with the contour of the land, and not up and down the hills.

2. Cultivation should be level,—that is, there should not be ridges made to catch and hold the water until it gathers sufficient volume to break through and start a wash.

3. When a gully is started, no matter how small, it should be stopped at once. Just as soon as the ground dries after a hard rain put the cultivators to work and fill up all the little ditches. If any are too large for this, or if any start in places where the cultivator will not do the work, fill them at once with manure, straw, leaves, any sort of litter.

4. If there is a natural depression down which the water must run, seed it down with redtop, or plant it to Bermuda, and leave it unbroken. If nothing else, scatter cane seed thickly along it.

The waste of the soil must be stopped.

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