



What Farmers Want to Know

By W. F. MASSEY.

Sweet Potatoes Rotting.

WHAT is the matter with my sweet potatoes? I dug them the first of November and they were nice as any one could wish. Had the vines cut off as soon as nipped by frost and let them stand till November 1. Dug them and brought them to the barn at night in sacks, and left them there several days. Then they were sorted over and wrapped in paper and put in a cool place. Now they are black inside as if frosted."

You want to know what is the matter with your potatoes after you have done all you could have done to spoil them. You handled them in sacks and that bruised them. You left them in the cold barn and that chilled them. You put them in a cool place, and that finished them. This is what is the matter with them. To keep sweet potatoes, they should be handled carefully in baskets or boxes, and stored at once where a high temperature can be maintained till they have sweated and dried off, and then a place where the temperature is not above 50 will do. Mine are still in the baskets they were picked up in the field in, and are as bright as they were in the digging. But they were dried off at a temperature of 85 degrees, and are now in a moderate temperature, and we never touch them except to take some out for cooking. I have not seen a rotten one yet. Sweet potatoes may not get actually frosted and yet if chilled when first dug it will have the same effect. You dug them too late and chilled them, and, of course, they turned black inside.

Tobacco After Legumes.

A TOBACCO dealer says: "We notice in your paper an inquiry as to the advisability of growing bright tobacco after peas. Would just like to say, by no means do this, for the simple reason that it will grow your tobacco too coarse and fibrous for wrappers and give you a bony texture suitable for nothing but the commonest kind of a filler."

The great majority of the growers unite in saying that they cannot grow good bright tobacco after peas or clover. I suppose that it must be from an excess of organic nitrogen. But this is a matter for the Southern experiment stations to investigate. Organic matter from a fresh clearing of a forest growth does not seem to affect the crop unfavorably, and it would seem that the nitrogen carried by the legumes is the cause. But there is room here for some good experimental work, for if a tobacco grower in the bright tobacco sections cannot practice a good rotation and improve his soil, it will be a heavy drawback to good farming. Probably a hoed crop of some other kind between the peas and tobacco would remedy the evil.

Ginseng.

A CORRESPONDENT writes: "The Progressive Farmer and other papers speak of 'ginseng suckers.' Are you not prejudiced in this matter? As a matter of fact, is not ginseng a paying crop? I know that it is expensive and requires a good deal of work in the preparation, but with reasonable success would it not pay?"

Ginseng grows wild only in the cooler mountain sections, and will not thrive in warmer climates. That is one thing against it in many of the sections people have been writing about. Then if any one has ever made it pay to grow the matured dry roots I would like to hear of it. There has been money made and is still being made by men selling roots and seed for other people to plant. But the Chinese, who are the only peo-

ple buying ginseng, do not want the cultivated roots. The editor of the Rural New Yorker recently visited the dealers in such things in New York, and found that they unanimously said that the cultivated roots will not sell. One dealer, who had a quantity on hand, said he would like very much to get rid of the stuff. If our correspondent thinks that it will pay to grow ginseng, he can prove it by planting and testing the crop, and then if he makes it profitable we will be glad to hear of it; that is, by making the mature crop and selling the dry roots, and not by selling planting roots to other people.

What Kind of Lime?

WHICH is best to use, ground limestone, burnt lime, or lime marl?" I regard it as mainly a matter of cost. You will have to buy and freight nearly twice as much ground limestone or marl as of burnt lime. One thousand pounds of burnt slaked lime is a fair dressing, but it will take about a ton of the ground rock or marl, and it depends on what the freight will be as to which should be used. One of the enthusiastic advocates of ground limestone, Mr. Joseph

UNTIL RECENTLY the untold fertile acres, the favorable conditions, and the simple wants of the people, have arrested, in agriculture, the operation of that great law—the survival of the fittest. It has been said that "anybody can farm." That was, but is not true. The unfitted in agriculture will have to yield for the same reason that many little factories, located off the lines of transportation, furnished with inadequate power, machinery and brains, have been abandoned. Many hillsides will be left to cover their nakedness with a new growth of hardy vegetation. It will thus be seen how well equipped a farmer should be; how fertile in brain, in imagination and resources; how full of wisdom, of enthusiasm, of faith; how quick to see, how prompt to execute, how patient to endure under difficulties, if the fertility of his land is to be transformed into abundant and perfect fruits and flowers.—I. P. Roberts.

Wing, advises eight to ten tons an acre, and, of course, no farmer is going to freight and handle that much. Some of these ground rock advocates have a great deal to say about the caustic nature of burnt lime destroying the organic matter; but if the lime is properly slaked before applying, this can be ignored, and if it did affect the organic matter, it would be mainly to promote its nitrification, and that is what we put the vegetable decay there for. The limestone and marl are all right if you can afford to use them as heavily as needed to equal burnt lime.

Sorghum Bagasse.

I HAVE bought several hundred bales of the sorghum 'pummies' to use as a fertilizer, which cost me two cents a bale of 50 pounds. What is the value of this as a fertilizer?"

It might be used as an absorbent of manure in the barnyard, but as a fertilizer it has very little value. It has about one-fourth of one per cent of nitrogen, one-tenth of one per cent of phosphoric acid, and less than one-fourth of one per cent of potash. In fact I had rather have pine straw or oak leaves, as the stuff is acid and would have to be composted with lime during the winter to make it of any value.

Making Acid Phosphate.

WE USE a good deal of acid phosphate in mixing fertilizer, and I am told that it is made by dissolving the rock in sulfuric acid. Cannot we buy the rock and acid and make it ourselves?"

No, you cannot do this on a small scale as cheaply as you can buy it on the market. You would need costly lead-lined tanks and other apparatus, and skill in handling the acid, and you cannot possibly make it as cheap as you can buy it nor as good.

Handling Manure.

I NOTE that you advise spreading manure as soon as hauled to the field, instead of piling, as saving labor. If it is not possible to plow under at once, being left exposed to the sun, would not the manure lose a great deal of its strength and value, and would not the loss amount to as much or more than the saving of labor in piling till ready to spread and plow under? I have the impression that manure lying on the surface depreciates rapidly."

Your impression is altogether wrong. It loses, when spread, some moisture perhaps, but if piled it will heat and lose ammonia rapidly. Spreading it on the surface and letting it lie there all winter is the best way to handle it. One of the experiment stations made an experiment by spreading manure on one plot in the fall and plowing it under. On another plot it was left on the surface all winter. On a third it was spread in the spring, and all plowed and planted to corn. The plot where the manure lay all winter on top of the ground made by far the best crop of corn. Spreading directly from the stables saves labor and manure, too.

Fertilizing Alfalfa.

I HAVE a good stand of alfalfa sown this fall. It was limed, manured and inoculated. What shall I apply now?"

Give it 400 pounds of acid phos-

phate and 40 pounds of muriate of potash an acre. You can apply these at any time, for they do not leach from the soil as nitrogen does. An annual top-dressing of same will keep the crop good, and it does not need the stable manure.

Red Top Grass.

WILL red top make good hay here in Onslow County, North Carolina?"

Yes, and a hay very easily cured, but a light crop per acre. Red top is fine in a mixture with heavier grasses, but makes too light a crop by itself, tho the hay is excellent. In a mixture with other grasses it does very well, and you can mix it with the earlier grasses like the meadow fescue and tall oats grass, and it will make a good second cutting after these. Where timothy does well it is good to mix with timothy, but timothy will not amount to much in your section.

In the Boll Weevil Section.

BOLL weevil has us; useless to plant cotton. What do you think of Spanish peanuts as a money crop in place of cotton?"

I think that while you may grow peanuts, you do not want anything "in the place of cotton." In the sections where the boll weevil has been longest, they have found that they can still grow cotton if they practice a good rotation of crops and farm well. Of course, all-cotton, and every year cotton on the same land is out of the question, and if the boll weevil will only force good farming it will be a blessing in disguise. Farmers make money at farming when they farm well in parts of the country where cotton has never been grown, and farmers in the South can do it if they farm well. Stick to cotton,

fight the boll weevil, rotate crops, grow feed for stock and improve the land by the use of legumes, and after a little while you will get over the scare.

Velvet Beans.

IS THE white velvet bean as early as the old sort?"

I have never seen a really white velvet bean. I have seen some of a very light color that I intend to plant in order to find out whether it is earlier than the old sort or not. The old variety does not mature much north of the southeast corner of North Carolina, and it remains to be seen whether this light colored one is earlier.

Broomsedge.

I WAS raised in the Cumberland Valley of Pennsylvania, where we used three big horses to a big plow, and I am not familiar with conditions down here. I would like to know if broomsedge has any fertilizing value plowed under?"

You have plowed under a grass sod in Pennsylvania, doubtless, and found good from it. Broomsedge, so-called, is not a sedge, but as true a grass as timothy, and it will help the soil if plowed under. It will be rather slower to decay than a timothy sod, and its growth generally indicates acidity in the soil. Lime should be spread after plowing it in to hasten its decomposition. Broomsedge is far better to turn under than no sod.

Killing Sassafras.

HOW shall I exterminate sassafras bushes?"

Cut them off at the ground, but do not grub them. Then next summer do not allow any to grow. Keep the tops mowed off and the roots will die. Grubbing them out and then letting them grow another season to repeat the grubbing will only increase them. No plant can long survive if not allowed to make green leaves.

Beggar Weed.

TELL me something about the Florida beggar weed, and its adaptation to North Carolina?"

Let the Florida people have the beggar weed. It is of no value in North Carolina. Stick to cowpeas and soy beans and crimson clover.

Double Glazed Hotbed Sashes.

PLEASE tell me where to get the double glazed sashes and frames you mention?"

These have been advertised in The Progressive Farmer heretofore. I get mine from the Sunlight Sash Co., Louisville, Ky. Any of the greenhouse building firms in New York or Philadelphia or Chicago can furnish them.

Early Garden Peas.

PLEASE name three of the best early garden peas."

I use Nonpareil, Nott's Excelsior, and American Wonder for the earliest. The last two are very dwarf, but good bearers and of good quality. Nonpareil grows rather taller and is also a good bearer.

Fall Strawberries.

A NUMBER of letters have been received asking where to get the Superb strawberry. You can get them from W. F. Allen, Salisbury, Md., whose advertisement appears in The Progressive Farmer. He issues a handsome illustrated catalog.

Mr. J. D. Dorsett, Spencer, N. C., sends us a beautiful ear of corn—one ear of a 125-bushel yield on an acre. His plan follows: "I have ground broken very deep, and placed in fine condition; in fact, I almost cultivate my crop before planting. I use cultivators, plow often and leave the ground level. Your very valuable paper is due a great deal of credit for my large yields."