

# Good Pastures on Every Farm

Article No. 12 on "Diversification and Independence in 1915!"

By TAIT BUTLER

**T**HERE is more in green grass than mere feed for livestock. Richer soils, larger crops, and better living are certain to accompany good pastures. A carpet of green o'er hill and dale does more than furnish a beautiful landscape to gladden the eye; it betokens a land which has always nourished a strong, prosperous and happy people.

Pasture plants, which furnish rich green feed for livestock, require warmth and moisture. The South has warmth, moisture and good soil of an abundance for the production of the best pastures. While rich soils produce good pastures, pastures also tend to produce rich soils. In other words, rich soils are the result as well as the cause of good pastures.

Temporary pastures, or those which are only to last for a few months, or at most a few years, are made on cultivated lands or those suitable for cultivation, and the pasture is merely a part of a rotation in the cropping system. The permanent pasture is largely made on land unsuited to cultivation, and in a farming system which seeks the largest returns from the land, probably the permanent pasture should only be made on lands not suitable for cultivation.

All land must produce some crop to be of permanent value. If not growing timber, or garden or field crops, then the aim should be to have it produce grazing for farm animals. There are millions of acres in the South producing no crop of value, which should and could be furnishing grazing enough to supply the meat, milk and butter now costing us millions of dollars annually.

## Put the Idle Acres to Work

**H**E WOULD not be regarded as a wise business man who kept half his capital idle, nor is the manufacturing plant likely to be prosperous which runs or operates only up to half its capacity; and yet half the lands of the South are producing no crop of value. Those lands which are bringing in no revenue are consuming the fruits of our labor from the cultivated acres. It takes too large a part of the crops of our cultivated acres to pay the interest and taxes on the idle acres.

It, therefore, follows that the lands which are producing nothing of value should be put into permanent pastures as far as conditions and capital will permit. We mention capital advisedly, for it requires money to make a pasture. An area of waste land does not become a pasture by merely enclosing with a fence. It is true that such land will produce some grazing, and if it will furnish enough feed to pay for the fence, and no more money is available than is necessary to build this fence, then that should be the first step taken towards the making of the pasture; but a fence alone will not often produce a good pasture on Southern lands.

Pasture plants are slow-growing plants and in the struggle for existence, if unaided by man, they are overpowered by rank or vigorous-growing non-pasture plants. The second step, therefore, in making a permanent pasture is to destroy and keep down the non-pasture plants. To the extent that this is done, or to the extent this is practicable, will depend the value of the pasture and the feed it will supply. The third essential to a pasture in the South, at least in the upland or rolling sections, is to prevent

the soil washing away until the pasture plants establish and fix themselves thereon, when they will prevent further washing.

The fourth step towards a pasture is the sowing of the seeds of pasture plants.

The warmth and moisture of the South result in a vigorous growth of weeds and non-pasture plants. Our heavy rainfall and the nature of our soils cause erosion or a washing away of the top soil in exposed places. These two facts account for the absence of grass-covered roadsides, vacant lands and untended areas. These conditions relieved or overcome by man, then pastures, or grass-covered fields, that will support livestock in vast numbers are as certain in the South as night follows day. Just keep the non-pasture plants from growing on a part of the pasture, if nothing more, and watch the results.

Permanent pastures are summer pastures. Winter pastures must of necessity be temporary. We hear much of the long grazing season in the South. It exists only in the imagination or in the possibilities from better efforts on the part of the stockman.

Winter pastures are also uncertain. Some winters, much grazing may be provided; while other winters little will be obtained by the best management, and yet, more or less winter grazing is possible every season throughout the Cotton Belt. But, after all, as has been said, the only reliable winter pasture is a silo.

Good management may lengthen the grazing period by starting it one to two months earlier in the spring and adding two to four weeks in the fall; but grazing from permanent pastures can not be depended upon for more than from seven to eight months in the northern half of the Cotton Belt and eight to nine months in the southern half. Cattle may succeed in living on the "range" or in the "cane" brakes, but the man who depends on these for the feed of his herds and flocks is the one who finds livestock unprofitable, or "just can't have any luck with stock." As a friend of the writer's recently put it, "Cattle will live on cane until they starve to death."

We have expected and wanted pastures with too little effort on our part. We have sought in vain for stock that would "rustle," instead of doing the rustling ourselves.

As stated, it takes money and labor to make pastures; a little money and labor to make a little pasture and much labor and money to make a large one. The man who has little money and time for making pastures should not, however, fail to use what he has. No man is justified in doing nothing because he cannot do much. If a large pasture or one of 10 or 20 acres is not possible, that is no reason for not having one or five acres of good pasture.

## Primary Points in Pasture Making

**F**OR emphasis, we again name what we regard as the essentials in the making of a pasture, in the order of their importance:

1. A fence that will confine the animals to be grazed and keep out those which are not desired.
2. The removal and continued destruction of non-pasture plants. The grubbing axe and the mower are as essential to a good pasture in the South as sunshine and rain are abundant.
3. The prevention of washing or erosion. Grass cannot grow in the making of gullies.
4. The sowing of the seeds of

those plants which do best and furnish the best grazing on the soils and under the conditions where the pasture is to be made.

Many thousands of dollars have been wasted in the South by sowing grass and clover seeds of kinds not adapted to the conditions, or without suitable preparation of the soil. The basis of a pasture in any section should be the plant or plants which grow most generally and freely in that section, or of some plant or plants known to do well under similar conditions.

In addition to plants that are known to make good pastures in the section, or under similar conditions, the aim should be to get such a variety as will secure the earliest as well as the latest grazing practicable. For instance, Bermuda grass and lespedeza are our two best pasture plants for the hot summer months. One, the Bermuda, stands drouth well, while lespedeza, although seriously affected in its growth by drouth, will come on again with wonderful rapidity when moisture comes. But neither of these makes an early pasture and should be combined with bur, alsike, or white clover, or all three, to insure early grazing.

In short, a large variety of pasture plants is desirable, because more feed will be obtained and the pasture will furnish grazing under varying conditions of soil, moisture and temperature and for a longer period in each year.

## Some Grass Mixtures That Are Good

**F**OR average lands of the South, possibly three to six pounds of Bermuda grass seed sowed on a well prepared seed bed from April to July, or Bermuda sod scattered and covered at any season of the year when there is moisture; one to two bushels of bur clover seed in the burs and three to four pounds of white clover per acre sown in the early fall and one bushel of lespedeza seed sown in February or March will give the most satisfactory results. When Bermuda is objectionable a good permanent pasture is more difficult to maintain.

For damp lands the following may be used:

Redtop .....	8 pounds
Alsike clover .....	6 pounds
White clover .....	3 pounds
Lespedeza .....	15 to 25 pounds

For uplands:

Orchard grass .....	15 pounds
Bur clover (in burs) .....	10 to 20 pounds
White clover .....	3 pounds
Lespedeza .....	15 to 25 pounds

In the Gulf Coast region carpet grass (*Paspalum compressum*) may take the place of Bermuda, but it is not as good a pasture grass, although on some of the lighter soils it may do better than the Bermuda. Bur clover and lespedeza should always be added to any Southern pasture if they will grow and there are few places where they will not grow.

For fall and winter pastures the cereals—oats, rye, wheat and barley, with rape on rich lands, must be our chief dependence for green grazing. But for an abundance of fall grazing cowpeas and velvet beans in the corn fields should be the main dependence.

For spring grazing the same cereals and spring-sown rape on rich land, with the addition of crimson clover, bur clover and vetch, all of which do well practically all over the South, afford the Southern stockman an opportunity to start his grazing season one to two months earlier than is generally practicable on the permanent pastures.

We are often asked to suggest a mixture of seeds that will give grazing. (Concluded on page 22, this issue)

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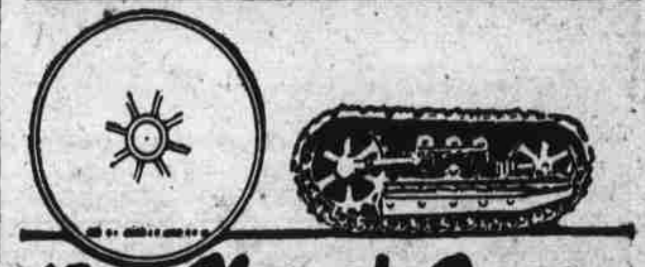
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This series of articles will run throughout the year, the next two articles in the series being:  
March 27—Killing the Grass Before It Comes Up; Arrange for Early Cultivation With Harrow, Weeders, etc.  
April 3—Fighting Crop Pests; Insects, Fungus Diseases, etc.