

SUNNY HOME SUGGESTIONS

What Poor Seed Cost Us in Low Yields—Shocking the Small Grain—Getting the Two-horse Cultivator to Do Good Work

I KNOW farms where crops of wheat have been made, from the same strain of seed, for ten years, no crop of which has yielded as much as twelve bushels per acre. The business has of course been a money-losing proposition, looked at from the dollar standpoint, for there is no possible profit to be made, on the ordinary farm in the humid sections, growing such crops of wheat.

But it is of the seed I wish to write at this time, for I believe men are making a big mistake who are, year after year, using seed from crops of wheat that produced below a profitable yield; the practice, in my opinion, tending to fix in the strain of wheat, to a certain extent, a low producing habit. It is a quite commonly accepted theory among cattlemen that if animals through many generations, because of lack of proper feed, are not given the opportunity to approach the maximum of their ability occasionally along any line in which they have been especially bred, that the strain gradually loses something of its former productive ability and it becomes poor practice to use animals for reproductive purposes that come from such strains. And if this is true—and this seems the sensible view to take of the matter when we consider how breeds have been brought to their state of excellence—then why may not the same thing be true concerning plants? The late T. B. Terry, of Ohio, who was, in a small way, a very successful wheat grower, for years threshed separately and saved for seed the grain grown on the most productive spots in the fields, and at no time for 20 years did he use for seed wheat that produced less than 30 bushels per acre. I would not, however, be understood as contending that grain from a field that for one year, under adverse conditions, produced a poor yield would not the next season produce a good crop under normal conditions; the point I would make being this: that, to my mind, long continued use of seed that had never had the opportunity to do its best would tend to lower yields than would be secured from seed that had, through some of its immediate ancestors, inherited the habit of doing its best once in a while.

My idea would be to start with a good yielding strain of seed, then by Mr. Terry's method keep up the improvement that the originators of the strain bred into it. Then an occasional resort to individual head selection would not be out of place where the grain grower was extra ambitious; this meaning simply going through the fields of ripe grain and selecting many of the best yielding heads produced under field conditions. And what is true of wheat is true also of other small grains.

And while on the subject of grains, I would like to urge better attention to the shocking of the grain crops. Many fields I saw last season where one-third to one-half of the shocks were either flat on the ground, or so badly leaned as to allow water to reach practically every bundle in the shock. And this means, when rain catches shocks in that fix, that there will be more or less sprouted grain, and when wheat has once sprouted its value is very much lessened for milling purposes.

The writer has shocked more or less grain every year save two for the past 36 years, and he found many years ago that a shock of wheat set up by a lazy man would seldom stand

long. Every bundle should go into its particular place with some muscle and brain driving it home. The many methods of shocking that I have tried during the past years have all been discarded except one. The shock of wheat is started with two good sound bundles set down firmly side by side, with the tops firmly pressed together. Then one bundle is added to each side making four in a row. Now a brace is set on either side of the four directly in the middle. Then when the four corners are filled, with each bundle leaning toward the center of the shock, a round shock of ten bundles is complete, and then two caps, with the tops well spread, and laid flat on top of the shock—the butts of one covering the tops of the other—the shock is finished, and if the muscle and brains mentioned above have been used the shock will stand through any ordinary storm and the grain be preserved dry.

No tool that our readers write me about seems to cause as much trouble to operate as the two-horse cultivator. A hundred men have written me, during the past six months, that their help cannot be taught to do good work with the riding cultivator, and at the same time keep the shovels out of the rows of plants.

I suspect much of the trouble is with the driving of the teams. I began to use the two-horse cultivator 34 years ago,—long before the present easily adjusted machines were on the market,—and the most of the guiding of the cultivator gangs needed at that time to be done by main strength and awkwardness. So I easily learned to take a good carriage whip afield with me when cultivating, and with the lines adjusted so the horse heads would be pulled just a little closer together than usual, just a light touch with the straight whip would remind the lagging horse that his proper place was just abreast of his mate and the same distance from the row of corn as the other horse. The team handled carefully in this way did the greater part of the steering of the gangs, and those who have been allowing their horses to sloop all over the rows will find in this hint a cure for much of their trouble, I believe.

Others—in the sandy sections principally—have complained that the shovel or disk cultivators would not keep away the vines and weeds—this kind of soil is particularly burdened with in subjection. Many have overcome this trouble by equipping their machines with wide cutting blades similar to the heelsweep used on single cultivators. A. L. FRENCH.

Don't Waste Fertilizer on Weeds

FERTILIZER is too expensive this year to feed to weeds. The case is well put in this Clemson College bulletin:

"Owing to the comparatively small amount of fertilizer used on crops this year, and to the lengthy drouth, care should be taken to see that the crops get as much of it as possible. There is not enough for the grass and weeds and the corn and cotton too. A more frequent shallow cultivation, and the keeping down of grass and weeds will enable the corn and cotton to take up more fertilizer. The crop needs all the moisture it can get, and shallow cultivation helps to keep a mulch on the land and so conserve what moisture there is present, as well as to kill the weeds and grass which use a considerable amount of water, which is needed for the corn and cotton. Don't let the crop starve or go thirsty for lack of sufficient shallow cultivation."

"Does the landlady give you your meals on time?" (Sadly) "Yes, but she won't trust me much longer."—Judge.

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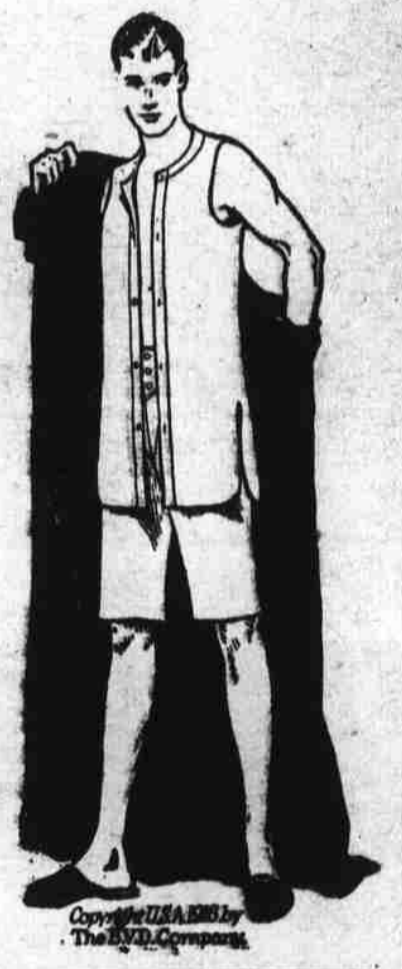
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