



What Farmers Want to Know

By W. F. MASSEY

Sapling Clover

"WE HAVE about eight acres of sapling clover from which we cut a heavy crop in July, and the second growth is now a foot high. Should this be cut for cow feed, or will cutting damage the next season crop?"

My experience with sapling clover is that it seldom does much after one year, and will hardly amount to much next season. Just as well cut it and feed it.

Lespedeza for Hay and Pasture

"I NOTICE that lespedeza is highly recommended in The Progressive Farmer. Is this crop better than or equal to crimson clover in a rotation?"

Lespedeza in the upper South makes a fine summer and fall pasture, but cannot be relied on as a hay crop except in the lower South. Most of the lands in the Piedmont country are already well set in lespedeza as far north as the Rappahannock River, and it will generally be found abundant on stubble fields after oats and wheat. But it cannot be compared in value with crimson clover, since it is a summer-growing plant, and depending entirely on peas and lespedeza for the legume crops will leave you without a winter cover, and for this purpose there is no crop equal to crimson clover for the South.

Lespedeza has now become so well attached to the soil in all the red clay sections east of the Blue Ridge that it is seldom necessary to sow it. It has one advantage that it will grow in a shade. I have seen it growing over ankle-high in a pine thicket in Davie County, N. C., and it seemed to be making a better growth there than in the open field. I once sowed lespedeza seed among the broomsedge covering a rocky hillside in Virginia, which was too full of fast rocks for plowing, and it grew and ran out the broomsedge and made an excellent pasture on that hillside, and I have noticed in many places in western North Carolina where it has driven out the broomsedge. On very strong bottom lands in the upper South it may make a hay crop, but its main value in this section is as a pasture plant. In all the lands where lespedeza, commonly known as Japan clover, has taken possession, it will grow among peas where these are sowed, for, as I have said, it does not mind shade. Hence I would always sow peas or soy beans or both mixed and not devote a whole season to lespedeza, and would always have crimson clover as a winter cover.

Growing Fall Lettuce

"I AM going to sow half an acre in lettuce seed. I will break it good and deep and cover it with manure, drilling the horse manure in 18-inch rows, cover with a drag and drill the seed and thin to 10 inches apart. This is on low muck land, rather moist but not wet. Shall I sow in September or late August?"

For a fall crop in the open ground the seed should be sowed early in August. Mine were sowed the first of the month. I find that it is best to transplant rather than thin where sowed. I set the plants in six-foot beds ten inches apart each way, and manure heavily with manure that has been piled and turned all summer till fine and black, for fresh manure will not answer half as well. Then as the plants start to grow I sprinkle nitrate of soda between the rows twice to push them rapidly along. You could hardly get good heads outside from sowing seed in September. I use for this crop the Big Boston. Then in September I sow seed of the Hanson and Wonderful and set the

plants in open furrows in November, the furrows running east and west and the plants set ten inches apart. These will usually winter well and head in early spring, and they too get the nitrate of soda as soon as they start in spring.

Crimson Clover

"WOULD it be advisable to sow crimson clover as a cover crop to turn under in spring north of the northern belt shown in the map in your Clover Special, especially in Albemarle County, Va.?"

There is no better winter cover crop for any section from the southern tier of counties in Pennsylvania southward, and no better soil improver, especially when used in connection with the summer growth of cowpeas and soy beans. Crimson clover is in very general use in the Southern counties of Pennsylvania. In all the southern half of York County, Pa., I saw nearly every corn field green with this clover in winter. The middle of that tier of counties east of the mountains seems to be about the northern limit of its success.

Wants to Grow Fall Onions

"I WISH to sow or plant a fall crop of onions that will make big bulbs. Please tell me the kind to plant, how to plant and cultivate."

You cannot grow ripe onions this season by planting now. Of course they will grow and will keep on growing right through the winter. You can plant in September sets of the Yellow Potato Onion, and they will make fine ripe onions by the first of next June, and are the earliest ripe onions you can grow. This onion is always planted from sets, for it never makes seed, but makes offsets at the root which are used for sets. Plant in very rich soil in rows 15 inches apart and keep clean of grass and weeds till cold weather, and then they will be helped by a mulch of manure between the rows to be worked in in the spring.

Grass Failing

"I HAVE a sod field in the upper Piedmont section of Virginia which has not been broken for twenty-five or thirty years. Until 1914 it was a splendid blue grass sod, but then I noticed that the soil had a crust or mold on it and seemed dead and the grass failed to grow well. This season has been very favorable, but the grass has done very little. I thought I would try lime, and would like to know how much to use an acre."

The main difficulty is that, like many others, you have thought that a sod could take care of itself, and did not realize that in grazing that sod for twenty-five or thirty years you have been exhausting the soil, especially in phosphorus, for every animal that made its bones from the grass carried off the phosphorus. That you cannot eat a cake and keep it is an old proverb, and you cannot keep taking crops of any sort from land without returning anything, and keep the land fertile and productive. I know hill lands that have been in sod for 75 years and pastured every season, which will today make more grass than they did fifty years ago. But these pastures have been top-dressed every spring with raw bone meal, and today will fatten more than a steer an acre.

Your grass has simply run out because of soil exhaustion. Liming the sod will do very little good. The best thing to do will be to break the land deeply and harrow in not less than a ton of lime and give a liberal applica-

tion of bone dust or of acid phosphate and resow with a mixture of 10 pounds of orchard grass, 5 pounds of redtop and 10 pounds of Kentucky blue grass an acre. The orchard grass and redtop will come on at once and make a shelter for the slower blue

grass which will finally make the sod. Then do not imagine that any pasture field will remain productive and profitable if nothing is done for it. Give the grass a top-dressing every spring and you can maintain a sod indefinitely.

\$500 More a Year for the Average Southern Farmer

BETTER METHODS OF LAND RENTAL FOR LANDOWNER AND TENANT

By PROF. W. F. MASSEY

THE cropper system so long practiced in the South and the crop lien have been the ruin of land and tenant, and should be forever abolished. They have made the tenant the slave of the landlord and the merchant, and have ruined lands that will require years of patient farming to restore. The cropper would be far better off working for wages and saving his money for the final purchase of a home, and the landowner would make far more from his land by equipping it with decent dwellings and barns where men with means enough to farm right could be induced to live.

A one-sided rental, planned only for the immediate benefit of the landowner, and a rental from year to year, giving the tenant no inducement to farm in an improving way, will never result in the improvement of the farms, nor in profit to owner or tenant. The terms of land rental should be made fair to both sides, and the duration of the tenancy should depend on the way the tenant farms and develops the productive capacity of the soil, for it has been proved that such a rental system can be made profitable to the landowner, the tenant and the land.

Two Wise Landlords

I CAN point to at least two wise landowners who became millionaires since the Civil War by buying and renting farms on a fair and permanent rental, and whose tenants made money, while the fertility of the farms has been maintained and increased through a wise contract as to the method of farming. And this was in a section where wheat and corn are the main sale crops, and no cotton grown.

Thirty or forty years ago a merchant in a country town saw that much of the land in his section was not being well cultivated and that the farmers who were renting land did not have a fair chance either for themselves or the landlord. He planned a method of improving rotations with grain and clover and stock, and bought a farm, put the buildings all in comfortable shape, and then offered to rent it to a good tenant who had means and stock for carrying it on according to his plan for improvement. He found a man who would accept the contract, with the agreement that he would never be moved so long as he farmed in accordance with the contract.

The tenant was required to furnish the stock and labor and pay for half the fertilizer used on the wheat crop, the only place where it was to be used. The landlord was to furnish comfortable dwelling and sufficient barn room, etc. The tenant was to sow a certain area in clover every year and pay for the seed. The landlord furnished fencing material and the tenant built the fences. The landlord furnished paint and whitewash and the tenant applied the paint to the dwelling when needed and the whitewash to the outbuildings. The tenant paid no rent on any of the stock he raised, and he owned all the clover hay, corn stover and straw so long as he fed it on the farm and spread the manure on the corn land annually. He had his choice of farming in a three-year rotation or a five-year one, the first involving but one field sowed annually in clover, and the other, two fields in clover and grass.

The immediate success of this first farm led to the purchase of another,

and a good tenant was ready to take it on the same terms. Then, from the profits of the crops, of which the tenant received one half, farm after farm was bought, and tenants were readily found until the owner finally had 56 farms in the county averaging over 270 acres each, and was assessed at a million dollars for taxation. Tenants lived on those farms for thirty years or more, and many of them bought farms of their own and rented them on the same terms while they remained on the rented farms till their own farms had been brought up to a similar condition. When the owner died he was a multi-millionaire, and as he stated in a public speech, it had all been made at farming, for every farm had been bought from the profits made on the previously purchased ones. This great estate has now been divided among the heirs, and the same system will be pursued by each.

A System Fair to Renter and Landowner

IN AN adjoining county other men owning land caught the idea and another owner became a millionaire, and another who died comparatively young left fifteen farms for his heirs to go on with, and which are now being managed by his son and the system still carried on. The tenants are allowed to buy a small flock of sheep in the fall and pasture them on the wheat, and feed them off for the spring market. And in every way there has been an effort to make the rental conditions fair to both sides and to induce good farming by the tenants, who know that they will reap the advantage of soil improvement and greater crops, since their tenancy depends on the skill and attention they give to the farm. Some have died on the farm and left the tenancy to their sons and the family remains right there as though they owned the place.

Such a system would bring wealth to land owners and tenants alike in the cotton country, and could be made there with the great Southern staple even more profitable than in the wheat-growing country where it has been so successful.

But it involves the expenditure of money by the land owner in equipping the farms with dwellings in which good farmers will live, and involves a fair give-and-take, with a strict contract as to the farming methods.

I should have added that in the rental mentioned the landlord furnishes lime when needed and the tenant spreads it. The tenants fully understand the importance of liming at least once in five or six years, and know that whatever is for the improvement of the soil will increase their profits on the farm.

Farms in the South divided into areas of about 250 acres of cultivable land could by some such system be made a wonderful source of profit to the landowners who have means for their equipment, and tenants could then take farms with the certainty of permanence and profit from the improvements, until they could buy farms of their own. Such a system would encourage the buying of farms by the tenants, and render a tenant's life one of hope for the future, and the men without means to farm right could work for them and gradually accumulate stock for renting in the same way and finally become landowners. It is the best way I know of for the gradual independence of the renter, and fortune to the landowner.