



What Farmers Want to Know

By W. F. MASSEY

ARE YOU FARMING AS WELL AS YOU KNOW HOW?

If You Know Better and Choose to Remain in the Old Rut, It Is Your Own Fault

I KNOW many who understand fully the value of cowpeas and crimson clover in the improvement of the soil, and yet they grow little patches of them and leave the greater part of their land bare all winter, and for their crops depend on little applications of the commercial fertilizers instead of getting all their land better stocked with decaying vegetation, humus, as we call it. They know that a humus-filled soil will make good applications of fertilizers more profitable by retaining moisture in the soil for their solution, but they never adopt any systematic rotation of crops that will bring these legumes regularly on the land and be constantly increasing the humus content. They are only patchwork farmers and do not use their brains or knowledge in the improvement of their soil.

And they write to me asking how much fertilizer and what mixture for this, that or the other crop, but are too unprogressive to adopt a rational system for the improvement of all their acres. They write that their land is poor, and fail to understand that it is themselves that have been keeping it poor. They see instances of great success in the South where men have adopted modern farm methods and are making money in the improvement of old, poor farms and making them fertile farms, and yet do not realize that their farms could be improved by the adoption of similar methods. They know that they are in the old ruts, and they know that there are ways for getting out of them, and yet they fail to use the methods they have been taught.

Thousands of men are not farming as well as they know how. They read the farm papers and read of how other men are advancing and building up their land, when they might be showing the same good object lesson to their neighbors who do not know how these things are done. Inertness and lack of effort to improve are keeping whole sections back. Are you who read this farming as well as you know how?

Talking with our county demonstrator recently, he said, "There are many here who are farming as well as I could tell them, but all around these are men who are not farming as well as they know how." You take The Progressive Farmer. Has it had any effect in the improvement of your farm? You have read for years of the value of a rotation of crops and always having a winter cover of clover or rye. Do you practice these methods, or do you grow corn merely with commercial fertilizers at a greater cost than if you had the clover to turn under? You have been told that a crop of clover will furnish more nitrogen than a ton of cheap fertilizer an acre, and yet do you keep your land bare in winter and depend on fertilizer to make corn, and leave your land no better than before the crop was grown? Do you still work your corn with a one-horse plow after breaking the land with the same implement, while you know that with deeper plowing and level, rapid cultivation with weeder and riding cultivator you can make the crop more cheaply on a clover sod turned under?

Do you haul out the manure you have left to waste in the barnyard and scatter it by hand, when you could load it up daily as fast as made into a manure spreader and ride out and leave it spread where it will not heat

and waste but will be where crops will need it?

Do you know that a clover or other sod turned under deeply will tend to hold the soil together and prevent much of the washing? Do you know that laying by cotton or corn with a turning plow will cut off the feeding roots, and that banking up the soil to the rows will still further injure the crop by drying out the soil to the remaining roots? Do you know that cutting the tops from the corn and stripping the blades below or stripping all the blades while the shucks are green and the ears sticking straight up will diminish the crop of corn, and that this waste could be prevented by allowing the corn to mature more and then cutting it with a binder and shocking the bundles?

Do you know that even a child can do better plowing with a sulky

through the hoes rapidly and easily and cultivate the garden stuff far better than with an ordinary hoe. And this tool now has been applied to a wheel and handles to push it through the rows. An old darkey once said to me when I set him to work with one of these, "Boss, I could make a cotton crap with this thing." Then when the garden is large it is wise to have one of the garden seed drills. They put in the seed far more regularly than can be done by hand, and the same drill can be had to shift into a cultivator. But for a garden cultivator I prefer the one with one tall wheel rather than two, as I can work as close as needed with it and in any width of rows, and it is far easier than the hand cultivators with two low wheels.

Then for making rows and furrows I have a little garden plow that can be pushed along a line with a marker attached to mark the next row, and in this way open a furrow for planting onion sets, etc., better than can be done with a hoe. In fact, in farm or garden we need the best implements to save labor, for the man

of the new subscribers I will give it again.

Trenches 15 inches deep are made 4 feet apart. These are filled half full of fine old rotten manure and this covered 2 inches with soil. The seed are then sowed rather thinly in a row, and when they are a few inches high are thinned to 2 feet and the soil gradually worked to them till level. During the summer two side-dressings of nitrate of soda are applied along the sides of the rows, and in the late fall the whole bed is covered thickly with manure. This is dug in in the spring and the cultivation continued and some nitrate of soda used again, and the manure cover in the fall. Then every year after cutting stops in June the plants are fertilized and cultivated clean till time to apply the manure. The object is to get a strong growth of crowns for the next spring. Big asparagus is the result of heavy and constant feeding.

Ground Sulphate Rock

"THERE is a man in my section selling ground sulphate rock and recommends it highly for mixing with cottonseed meal and other ammoniates as a substitute for acid phosphate. Please tell me in The Progressive Farmer what you know about this sulphate rock."

Any fellow making any such statements is a good man to avoid. Sulphate of what? You do not say, and a sulphate must have some base to be a sulphate. If he calls his article merely sulphate rock, keep your money in your pocket. It is probably ground phosphate rock, and that will not well take the place of acid phosphate in a mixed fertilizer. As I have often said, it may be a good thing for a good farmer but a poor thing for a poor farmer. Better use acid phosphate, for his calling his article sulphate rock marks the fake.

Pruning Shrubby

"WHEN and how should I prune the shrubs that bloom in the spring, such as Spireas, Forsythias etc.?"

The only time to prune these is just after the bloom is over. Pruned now, you will cut off the bloom. I have plants of the Spirea Van Houttei which are a snowy mass in spring. As soon as the bloom fades I shear the whole plant over, cutting off all the shoots that have bloomed. Then the bushes made a mass of fresh shoots for the next year's bloom. Other spring blooming shrubs are treated in the same way.

The Himalaya Berry

EVERY now and then some one writes praising the Himalaya berry, a sort of climbing blackberry. This was tried here for several years and found to be worthless. The New York Station at Geneva says that it was one of Burbank's introductions. At the Geneva Station the plants made a very strong growth, but were not hardy. The fruit as produced there was absolutely worthless, and the same result was found here in southeastern Maryland. Like many of Burbank's things, it may have some value in California and the Pacific coast.

Currants and Gooseberries

"CAN I grow currants and gooseberries with success in southeastern North Carolina?"

You can grow the bushes, but if you get much fruit I will be surprised. The currants may give you a little fruit if planted on moist soil, but the gooseberries will seldom fruit at all. I had a gooseberry bush in Raleigh which made a splendid growth, and in six years made one gooseberry. I had there moderate crops of currants of the Fay variety.

A SUCCESSFUL SOY BEAN HARVESTER



THE soy bean harvester here shown is a two-wheeled machine which straddles the row and is drawn by two horses. As this machine moves up the row, four series of rapidly revolving arms shatter the seed into a receptacle at the rear. When using this harvester, the plants should have shed their leaves, and for a more successful operation, the crop should be on a slight ridge elevated not less than six to eight inches above the water furrow. Under favorable conditions two men and two horses can harvest an acre of soy beans in two hours by this method. There is a slight waste in using this machine, but this waste is more than compensated for by the saving of time and labor.

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plow that holds the plow to its cut than a man can do with a walking plow? Do you know that a wheat drill will put in peas far better and make the crop better than sowing by hand and harrowing in, leaving some deeper than they should be and some not covered at all?

Do you know that a fanning mill will prepare your small grain better for seed by eliminating the light shrivelled grain and giving you the best and heaviest seed for the growing of the crop?

Do you know that by flopping a sod flat upside down you are making a layer of loose vegetation to cut off the rise of the soil moisture when proper edging up of the furrows would prevent this?

Do you know that a loose, cloddy field will not make as good a crop of wheat or oats as land that has been well prepared some time ahead and has been disked and harrowed and tramped till the surface is fine and well settled? Do you know that mule power is cheaper than man power, and that one man with two mules and a riding cultivator can do better work than two men with plows in a cotton or corn field, and that the use of machinery and mule power will save labor and increase crops?

Then knowing all these things, why do you limp along in the old way?

Then in the garden, do you know that the old-fashioned hoe is the slowest and most costly tool you can use? I have a hoe made like a five-tooth spring cultivator, and can pull it

whose farming or gardening saves in labor is making a greater margin between cost and value of the crop.

On the farm then we need to use our brains and make mule power and machinery accomplish more than man power, and in the garden we need the tools that will make our hand power more effective.

An Asparagus Bed

"I PUT out an asparagus bed last spring in the following manner: I dug a hole 4x12 feet and 18 inches deep, putting six to eight inches of stable manure in the bottom and covering with four inches of soil. Then placed the roots on the surface and covered with four inches of rich earth. They made a fine growth the past summer, and I kept the weeds and grass pulled out. How shall I treat the bed now to get the best results?"

You do not say how far apart you planted the roots, and from what you say about pulling weeds I am of the opinion that you have planted the bed too thickly. To get the best asparagus the roots must have plenty of room. I plant in rows four feet apart and two feet in the rows. I do not set roots, but sow the seed just where I want the plants to grow, and the undisturbed roots will make cuttings a year sooner than the transplanted ones. I have fully described the method heretofore in The Progressive Farmer, but for the benefit