ALFALFA SPECIAL.

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FROM THREE TO FIVE TONS OF ALFALFA HAY A SEASON.

A crop which, when successfully grown, makes such yields as this, the product being worth per pound nearly or quite as much as wheat bran, is well worth all the risk of failure in first or second attempts at cultivating it.

HOW TO SUCCEED WITH ALFALFA.

During the past few years The Progressive Farmer has given considerable space to a discussion of the value of alfalfa as a forage crop and the methods found most successful in its production. In this special issue the subject is again thoroughly covered, but the crop merits all this attention from us.

Extraordinary Value as a Forage Crop.

It also deserves the thoughtful consideration of every farmer, for its value as a forage crop can scarcely be over-estimated. Any crop that when once set on the land will remain for years without reseeding and will produce on one acre each season from three to five tons of hay, every pound of which is nearly or quite equal to the same weight of wheat bran, for which we pay from $20 to $24 per ton, should not be passed by without a serious effort at its succesful production.

After all that has been written about alfalfa along the lines above-indicated, it is but natural that large numbers of farmers all over the country should have made efforts to grow it, but it must be admitted that these effors have not been as successful throughout most of The Progressive Farmer territory as could be hoped for. The writer has seen the results of efforts to grow alfalfa in all sections of the Southeastern States and he regrets to state that nineteen out of twenty of the **first** attempts have been dismal failures. The second attempts, if made on the same lands, have been more successful, but only slightly so, while the few that have been persistent enough to make a third trial after two failures have done very much better, many of them making complete success. Alfalfa is now grown successfully on certain small areas in nearly every section of the South and under widely varying conditions, soil and management.

Fourth of an Acre is Enough to Begin With.

What do these facts teach us? That since ultimate success is probable while the first attempts are usually failures, it is the part of wisdom to make these failures as small as possible, consisent with a fair trial.

We believe the first attempt to grow alfalfa should be on a quarter of an acre instead of on a larger area.

And why failures at first with subsequent success? Most writers on the subject say it is necessary to learn how to manage the plant. That is so to a certain extent, for some of the failures undoubtedly are due to faulty preparation of the land, unsuitability of soil and insufficient and improper fertilization; but it is our opinion that only a small proportion of the failures are due to lack of knowledge in these important matters. So much has been written about the necessity of selecting the right type of soil, thorough preparation of the seed bed, liberal fertilization, and liming, that these essentials are very generally given proper attention in even first attempts to grow alfalfa.

Soil Inoculation is All-Important.

The chief cause of the failures to successfully produce this crop at the first and second attempts is lack of soil inoculation.

We have little faith in the practicability of inoculation by any other method than with inoculated soil—from a field that has grown alfalfa successfully. But this method is not usually feasible because of the difficulty in securing sufficient soil to adequately inoculate the area sown. How, then, is this difficulty to be overcome? By growing your own bacteria, not in a flask in a laboratory, but in your own soil.

How to Grow Your Own Bacteria.

In nearly every instance there are a few vigorous, inoculated plants, even at the first attempt; because a few bacteria are almost certain to be carried on the seed. These may, and probably ought, to be added to by means of inoculated seed and soil, when practicable; but all these methods combined usually fail to introduce into a soil, which has not recently grown alfalfa, sufficient bacteria to meet the requirements of a first crop.

The most rational plan, therefore, is to start on a quarter of an acre of the right sort of soil, lime and fertilize liberally, thoroughly prepare the seedbed, and then inoculate as liberally as possible. If the first attempt fails, you may rest assured that if the land is suitable, these bacteria that you have introduced will rapidly multiply, and if the land is cultivated so as to scatter them, and alfalfa planted each year for them to grow on, at the end of two or three years they will be sufficiently numerous to make the crop a success. When you have one-quarter of an acre properly inoculated you have the material right on your own farm, fresh, and the very best for inoculating as much more land as you may wish to put into alfalfa.

And Finally—Use the Mower Freely.

There is one other point at which failures are common. The mower is not used sufficiently often and persistently. Many seem to think that because the alfalfa has not grown sufficiently since the last cutting to be high enough to make hay it does not need cutting again. **Mow as soon and as often as the alfalfa begins to turn yellow or the grass and weeds get ahead of it.**

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