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Field Selection of Seed as a Guide Post to "\$500 More a Year Farming."

NONE CAN tell just what we lose each year by the planting of seed of inferior quality; but there can be no doubt that it amounts to millions of dollars. It is one of the most unnecessary of all losses, too, because it takes just as much labor to prepare for and cultivate the crop when poor as when good seed are planted, and the difference in the yield is ordinarily out of all proportion to the difference in cost of the seed. The cost of the seed for a corn or cotton crop, indeed, seldom amounts to more than a few cents to the acre, even when the most carefully selected seed are used; but the difference between the yields from good seed and poor have often been one-fifth, or one-fourth, or even one-third of the crop. Can we afford to risk such loss simply because we have not the patience, the energy or the knowledge necessary to select seeds of good quality?

It is not enough to have a good variety. Individual plants of the same variety vary greatly, and it is only by constant selection of the best individuals that a variety can be improved or even kept up to the state it has attained. Look, for example, at the corn plants in this picture, and note the differences in type, the good and bad characteristics possessed in varying degrees by each. The long shank to the ear on No. 2, for example, is objectionable, as is the upstanding ear on No. 3. Contrast, too, the excessive height of the ear on No. 3, with that of the ear on No. 1; and note the difference in the stout, broad leafed stalk of No. 1, and the slender, weak, suckered stalk of No. 4. None of these stalks is ideal, but few farmers would hesitate to select No. 1 as the best in the lot. It represents a happy medium between the extreme types of No. 3 and No. 4: and is a more vigorous and better balanced plant than No. 2.



CORN PLANTS OF VARYING TYPES.

No. 1. A Fairly Good Stalk: No. 2. Objectionable Because of Long Shank to Ear: No. 3. Ear Too High and Too Small: No. 4. Plant Slender and Suckered.

The first thing the farmer must do when he comes to selecting seed is to determine the kind of plant he wishes—to fix an

ideal in his mind and work towards that. We wish our corn plant, for example, to be vigorous, not too tall, with a fairly stout stalk, and large leaves. We want it to bear an ear, or ears, in proportion to the size of the stalk, at a medium height from the ground, and on a short shank not stiff enough to hold it upright. If the plant is of a prolific variety—and the prolific varieties have given the best yields in the South—we want at least two or three ears of typical form and practically uniform size, well covered at the ends with the shuck. We want these ears smooth, gradually tapering to the end, well filled at butt and tip, and with deep, square-faced, pointed grains so as to insure a large per cent of grain to cob. The most common faults of Southern corn are an undue proportion of stalk to ear, barrenness, ears borne unduly high, and poorly filled ears with too large a percentage of cob to corn. All these things can be corrected by careful selection in the field from carefully planted seed patches.

As to what can and should be done in the selection of seed for the cotton, tobacco and other crops read what is said on pages 3 and 4; and remember that it will pay to plant good seed of any crop and that good seed can in most cases be secured only by selection in the field at gathering time. The plant is the individual, not the grain or the ear or the boll; and any system of seed selection which does not take the whole plant into consideration is bound to give disappointing results. Now is the time to prepare for better crops next year.

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