

Timely Farm Suggestions

By TAIT BUTLER

Don't Let the Weeds Make Seed

THE South must give more attention to a solution of the weed problem. Our roadsides, unoccupied lands, so-called pastures, fence rows and hillside ditches are breeding grounds for the production and distribution of weed seeds. If only these places were made unsightly and less productive, because of their production of weed, this alone would be sufficient reasons for abating the nuisance; but a greater loss results from the increased cost of cultivating our crops resulting from our disregard of weed control. The crops of the South are largely row or inter-tillage crops and the cost of cultivation forms a large part of the cost of production. Much of the need for cultivation is due to the fact that we have continued year after year to grow and scatter weed seeds, as if they were something of no consequence.

There is little doubt but we frequently give more cultivation than is necessary for the most economical production were it not necessary to cultivate to keep down weeds. Moreover, the cultivation necessary to destroy weeds is often a positive and direct injury to the crop. It is often impossible to destroy the weeds and grass in a crop without great injury to the roots of the growing crop. The greater the weed nuisance the more hoeing and use of small implements that are required and the use of these always greatly increases the cost of production.

It is simply astonishing, to the average person, how quickly a plot of land can be made comparatively free of weeds and the cost of cultivation greatly reduced, by keeping all weeds and grass from maturing seeds, if it is not reseeded from adjoining fields. But reducing the cost of cultivation is by no means the only reason for the South awakening to the importance of her weed problem. The value of our seeds, hays and other products is greatly reduced by the presence of these weeds, and the yields of our crops are greatly reduced; but greater than even these injuries is the injury to our growing crops by the destruction of their roots in our attempts to destroy the weeds.

The Middleman Must Market From as Well as to the Farmer

THERE are two tendencies of thought among those who give some attention to the marketing of the farmer's products. One is that the middleman must be eliminated, as far as possible, and that the farmer must market his own produce, some going so far as to appear to think that he can do this direct to the consumer. The other line of thought is that the middleman is a necessity and that he must be developed into an expert middleman, so that he can and will render a service commensurate with the toll or commission he takes. That if this middleman is really an expert or specialist in the line of marketing farm produce, he can market what the farmer has to sell better than the farmer can market it for himself and that consequently the farmer can and will pay him a fair price for this service.

In the past the middleman or the local merchant of the South has only marketed to the farmer and has steadfastly refused to market from the farmer. It is certain that the movement for the elimination of the middleman will continue until the middleman awakens to a realization

of his full responsibilities. Unless he becomes truly an expert merchant and is able to market produce to and from the farmer, better than the farmer can do it for himself, the middleman will in the course of time eliminate himself.

But the development of an expert middleman or merchant who will be efficient in marketing from, as well as to, the farmer, does not mean that cooperative or community buying and selling will not or should not be developed. Nor, on the other hand, does the development of cooperative or community buying and selling mean the elimination of the middleman or expert merchandiser in farm products, who is really efficient and as a specialist renders a special or expert service.

If the local merchant who sells to the farmer will not make himself just as efficient and willing to market from the farmer, or if this local merchant cannot or will not do the buying and selling for the farmer in a more efficient way than the farmer can do it for himself, either individually or collectively, the farmer-customers of that local merchant are going to increase their dealings with the manufacturers, jobbers and the mail order houses. But if on the other hand, the local merchant is really a specialist and an expert in his line he is apt to do the merchandising better than the farmer individually or collectively can do it for himself. If he does he will not be eliminated. In other words, he will only be eliminated to the extent he is inefficient or does not render a service in proportion to the toll he takes.

PREPARING FOR FALL OATS

Failure Has Largely Been Due to Preventable Causes—How Some of These May Be Avoided

IT IS not too early to begin planning for sowing a large acreage to oats this fall. It is true that the oat crop sowed last fall was less satisfactory than for many years, but this should not prevent the seeding of a large acreage this fall. Many of the failures were due to preventable or avoidable causes. The experience of the past clearly shows that fall-sowed oats are the most dependable small grain crop for the South. This applies to all soils and all sections of the Cotton Belt. Of course, some soils and some sections grow better fall oats than others, but oats are the surest small grain crop for the Cotton Belt.

Early consideration and preparation for the fall seeding of oats are demanded for the purpose of avoiding as far as practicable those errors and conditions which were at least partly responsible for many of the failures of the past season. More of these failures were due to insufficient and late preparation of the soil and late seeding than to weather conditions, although these were much more unfavorable than usual. Not only was the moisture insufficient for germinating the seed last fall and the winter freezes very destructive, but in many sections the rainfall this spring was also insufficient for growing and maturing the crop. In short, the weather has been largely blamed for the shortage of the fall-sowed oat crop this season. The weather, as stated, was unfavorable, and yet earlier and more intelligent preparation of the seed bed and earlier seeding would in most cases have largely overcome the unfavorable weather conditions.

There are difficulties in so arrang-

ing the farm work and the harvesting of other crops as to make it practicable to prepare the oat lands early, but much more can be done towards this than is generally done. Likewise it may be difficult to get the oats sowed as early, as experience has shown is best, but if we tried harder or if we appreciated the value of earlier seeding we would try harder and would succeed in getting the oats in earlier. Even where the oats do not winter-kill they do better, that is make larger yields, when sowed moderately early. No definite date can be given as the best for sowing oats that will fit all sections and seasons, but it is common observation and a fact beyond question that those oats sowed rather early for the section usually suffer less from winter-killing and yield better than those sowed later. Dividing the Cotton Belt into three sections, the following are probably about the best periods for the fall seeding of oats:

Northern third, September 1 to October 1.

Middle third, September 15 to October 15.

Southern third, October 1 to November 1.

The writer's observations would lead him to conclude that the first half of these periods is better than the second half for each section, although that will be influenced somewhat by season and the variety of oats used.

Owing to the necessity of saving moisture it may be best not to break corn and pea or soy bean lands for the fall seeding of oats, provided the soil is fairly mellow and there is not too much vegetable material on the surface. When the land must be plowed, and especially if there is much vegetation to turn under, it should be done several weeks before seeding, and in the interval between breaking and seeding considerable effort should be made by the use of the disk harrow, cultipacker or corrugated roller, and the spike-toothed harrow to compact or settle the soil and hold moisture. If this is not done there is danger that the soil will dry out down as far as it was broken. While this sort of preparation is usually best, if such methods are not followed or if the oats must be sowed at once, it will usually be found best to use the disk harrow instead of the plow even though considerable vegetable matter is cut up and left on the surface.

Another matter which should receive attention at once is the ordering of fertilizers for fall use. There is a car shortage already, and more disturbance in transportation rather than less may probably be looked for; therefore, those who are going to use fertilizers this fall should place their orders at once.

On fairly good lands probably the only fertilizer which should be generally or largely used for the oats this fall is acid phosphate, or in some cases basic slag phosphate. On thin lands a small amount of nitrogen might be used, but generally it appears more economical to apply the nitrogen as a top-dressing when the oats start growing next spring.

Fertilizers have risen in prices, but as a rule they have not risen as much as have the prices of farm products, and therefore we should use as much or more fertilizer than usual. With a large demand for food and feed, we can afford to trade fertilizers for an increased yield, even if the increase little more than pays the cost of applying the fertilizer.

And, finally, those who have not their own oats or have not arranged for them should at once secure what they will need. Owing to the scarcity of feed and its high price, the oats grown this year will be fed or sold

more largely than usual and consequently seed oats are likely to be scarce before the fall seeding season is over.

PASTURE PROBLEMS

A Discussion of the Essential Factors in Getting and Keeping Good Pastures

THERE are many reasons why the small grains should be largely used in the South for winter pasturing. One of these is that they are our surest dependence for fall and winter grazing. In fact, for late fall and winter grazing they are about our only dependence, on the average soils of the South. Crimson clover may furnish more and better grazing from March 1 to May 15, but for fall and winter grazing the small grains are much superior, because they are so much more certain and make so much larger growth in the fall if sowed at the right time. Of the small grains we think barley, wheat and oats superior to ordinary rye, on the best lands of the South, but rye has possibly been more largely used, because it stands freezing well, will make better growth on poor land and starts early and makes a rapid growth in the spring. However, we believe oats a better grazing crop for even the average lands of the South than the rye usually planted. In fact, about the poorest grazing plant for winter, with which we are familiar is rye, when Northern grown seed is used. If seed grown well South in the Cotton Belt can be obtained rye will usually furnish considerable grazing during the late fall and winter if sowed from September 15 to October 15, according to location. But we don't if rye should be sowed for fall and winter grazing, unless the Abruzzi variety can be obtained. As stated, truly Southern grown seed may furnish good fall and winter growth, but rather than depend on the seed sold for "Southern" rye, we would prefer to use oats, wheat or barley for fall and winter grazing. The reports from Abruzzi rye and our limited observation of it lead us to believe that beyond doubt it is one of the very best plants which the South can use for furnishing fall and winter grazing. Some of our reports on trials just north of the Cotton Belt have not been favorable, but practically in all cases and from all over the Cotton Belt the reports of its splendid grazing qualities are unanimous. While rye will grow better than the other small grains on poor land it is not well to depend on getting much grazing except from at least fairly good land. While it will do better on light or sandy soils than wheat, it will not stand poorly drained soil. If the water stands on the land, even for a comparatively short time, the rye will be killed.

As with all other crops, a thoroughly prepared soil gives best results, but rye will submit to lack of preparation better than the other small grains. If the land can be broken long enough in advance of seeding to thoroughly settle the soil we would prefer that sort of preparation, but sowing between cotton rows or in corn fields and on pea stubble after disking are fairly satisfactory. When sowed between cotton rows covering is necessary. The use of the two or three row drill is the best method of sowing between cotton rows and the grain drill better than broadcast for open fields. If pasturage is expected sow by September 15 in the northern half of the Cotton Belt and by October 1 in the southern half. Use abundance of seed if most grazing is expected— from 6 to 8 pecks per acre. Less seed is required for the Abruzzi than for other varieties.