



## What Farmers Want to Know

By W. F. MASSEY

### Book on Violet Culture

"I WANT to grow violets for sale and do not know how to go about it. Where can I get information?"

You can get a book on violet culture written by Prof. Galloway, of the Department of Agriculture, and published by A. T. De La Mare, 238 West 37th St., New York City.

### Velvet Grass

SEVERAL correspondents have sent me samples of a light grayish grass with a very large smooth head. This is *Holcus lanatus*, velvet grass. Here in Maryland it is considered merely a weed that is bitter and unpalatable to cattle. Southward it seems to acquire better quality, and I have heard that in Louisiana it is valued for hay. My own opinion is that we have an abundance of better grasses and do not need it anywhere.

### You Did Not Read Closely

"I NOTICE that you say we should raise enough Irish potatoes for home use and for seed next spring. I was under the impression that if the first crop of potatoes is planted next year they will not make satisfactory yield."

You are perfectly right in your impression. The early crop of potatoes, if you managed to keep them over winter, would be so weakened by sprouting and having sprouts rubbed off that they will make very poor seed. But what I have advised is to plant a late crop of the early varieties in July. These will easily keep without sprouting in winter and not only make better potatoes for home use than the early ones, but will make the best of seed for spring planting.

### Alfalfa Turning Yellow

"ON APRIL 6 I sowed three acres of alfalfa, using 5,500 pounds of ground limestone an acre and 500 pounds of 16 per cent acid phosphate. Have a fine stand about six inches high and it is turning yellow. I have ordered the application of 200 pounds of nitrate of soda on the three acres, and will use 200 pounds of acid phosphate. Have also told them to clip the alfalfa and leave it on the land. Is there anything else that can be done to save it?"

I have found that when young alfalfa gets to turning yellow the clipping of it with the mower will result in its coming out green from the base. I hardly think the nitrate of soda was needed, but it will do no harm.

### Fertilizers and Fillers

"IN BUYING commercial fertilizers we pay freight on a great deal of sand and other worthless filler, and then have to haul it to the farms. The members of our exchange would like to eliminate this. I understand that some of the Florida potato growers use a mixture of 600 pounds of blood and bone, 600 pounds of cottonseed meal and 800 pounds of acid phosphate. Would this be a good mixture for potatoes in our Norfolk section? I always read your page with great pleasure and profit, and often hear others speak of it. What do you think of Rhubarb as a crop here? Do you know if black raspberries will do well here?"

I think that the Florida mixture you mention will have a needless amount of nitrogen. I have used and prefer the equal mixture of cottonseed meal and 16 per cent acid phosphate. This will run about 3 per cent nitrogen, 8 per cent phosphoric acid and nearly 1

per cent of potash. In moist and strong land about Norfolk you can grow rhubarb, but I doubt that it will be profitable for Northern shipment, as its bulk is too large a matter for the usual price, but it should sell well in Norfolk. Black raspberries should do well.

### Fall Potatoes After Peas

A CORRESPONDENT writes: "I dug my early Irish potatoes five weeks ago and now have peas 12 inches high on the land. Want to plant late crop on same land. When should the peas be turned under?"

I think that it would have been better to have sowed the peas on another piece of land for the potatoes, and let the peas after potatoes mature before turning under. But no doubt the peas turned under will help the crop even on the same land. You intend to plant some Peach Blow potatoes as well as some early ones. In your section I would plant the Peach Blows the middle of July and the early ones between that and August. There-

onion in early September thinly, and when they are the size of a goosequill transplant them in rows 16 inches apart, for ripening the following summer. You can grow celery plants to set in August and early September for the winter crop.

### Keeping Onions

"I HAVE a fine lot of onions and would like to know how best to keep them."

Cure the onions well in the sun, but do not let rain fall on them. Then store them in the coolest place you have and spread them out thinly. A dry cellar that can be made totally dark will answer. In winter keep them only a little above the freezing point. In fact a slight freezing will do no harm, but heat must be avoided. Early ripened onions are very hard to keep through the hot weather, and if cold storage is at hand it would be well to use it. If they get to sweating they may rot, and any moisture should at once be dried off by stirring them up and sunning.

### Inoculation for Legume Crops

A FIRM engaged in the production of laboratory cultures of the various forms of bacteria growing on the roots of the various legumes writes:

### THE BUSINESS FARMER'S CALENDAR: FIVE THINGS TO DO THIS WEEK AND NEXT

GET the stubble land planted as soon as possible, preferably to a legume crop.

2. Don't fail to plan for a goodly acreage of fall Irish potatoes. Aim at plenty for the family and in some cases a surplus for the market.

3. Don't wait too late to make side applications of fertilizers. In the Lower South it is already too late for cotton, but applications to the late corn when it is two to four feet high may yet be made.

4. Now that the rush of work is somewhat less acute, plan an all-day picnic party for the family, inviting some of the neighbors to join you.

5. Let all future cultivations be shallow, the aim being to kill weeds and grass and save moisture, at the same time doing the least possible injury to the roots of the growing crops.

fore the peas should be turned under the first of July, after disking them down well.

### Dusty Alfalfa Hay

"WHAT can I do to prevent dust forming in my alfalfa hay?" I cut it and cure it good, and then comes a dust. I have two and one-half acres in alfalfa and have cut eight wagon loads and will soon cut again.

Probably the dust comes from your over-curing it. If you leave alfalfa hay out in the sun till the leaves are crisp and will crumble, you will not only lose value in the hay but will have dusty hay. Alfalfa, like clover and peas, should be mainly cured in the windrow and cock and go into the barn before the leaves get crisp, and the final curing will be done in the barn. My hay has the leaves bright green in color when perfectly dry and cured. Sun-bleached hay will always be dusty.

### Growing Cabbage Plants for Sale

"HERE in Mississippi, when should I sow cabbage seed to make plants for fall setting, also onion seed? What other seed can I sow for fall planting?"

If you mean cabbage plants for setting and heading in the late fall for winter use, the seed of the late varieties like the Late Flat Dutch should be sowed the first of July in your section. But if you mean to grow plants of the early cabbage to set in the fall for spring heading, you should sow seed of the early Jersey Wakefield from the middle of September to the first of October.

You can sow seed of the Prizetaker

"Now here is a method whereby, by preparation now, the farmer need not worry about the source of ammonia for his next year's cash crops. He will not have to bother the Government to furnish ships for the carrying of nitrates from South American ports when the ships are so vitally needed for the conduct of this war. . . . Let the farmer raise his own nitrates."

And so say I, but what I object to is the effort of some of the parties engaged in the growing of these cultures to cause the farmers to believe that it is necessary to use the cultures every time a legume crop is planted. It is true that if a farmer uses a legume crop that has been supplied with nitrogen through the agency of the cultures, and finds that he gets an increased crop of corn or cotton the next season and then goes to work to grow clean culture crops on the land till he has used up all the added humus and has burnt out in the sunshine and starved out in the lack of organic decay all the added bacteria, he will need to inoculate once more.

I believe that in the introduction of a legume on soil where that legume has never been grown, the artificial cultures are very valuable, provided the soil is not so acid as to kill them. But where the soil is well inoculated and a short rotation is systematically adhered to, and the legumes come in often on the land, which is kept sweet by an occasional liming, it will not be profitable to buy the cultures thereafter for every legume crop planted.

I thoroughly believe that the farmers should grow their own nitrogen, and I know many who were doing so before the artificial cultures were introduced, and are still doing so with-

out the use of the cultures, for their soil is so completely inoculated with the clover bacteria that the best live culture will not have effect enough to make it pay.

I have never seen it profitable to use artificial inoculation for the annual crimson clover where any of the true clovers have been grown for generations. I have used artificial cultures with fine effect on soil where that particular type of legume has not been grown, but on soil where red clover has been grown, since the oldest inhabitant does not remember, the artificial cultures may have some noticeable effect, but not enough to make it pay to use them. All the true clovers, such as red clover, alsike, white clover and rabbit-foot clover, all of the *Trifolium* genus, will inoculate the soil for each other. Where I live all our soils are, when left out of cultivation in the fall, soon covered with a winter growth of the annual rabbit-foot clover, which on rich soil makes a really heavy growth. And here the crimson clover grows on the poorest of old sandy ridges in a wonderful way without any artificial inoculation.

Farmers in any section who farm right will never need to buy nitrogen for the ordinary farm crops so long as they maintain and increase the organic decay in their soil and get it well inoculated for the legumes they grow, and always grow and use the legumes as often as practicable. But when the humus is maintained and the soil kept sweet and the legumes come in frequently on the land, I do not believe that it will pay to keep adding the bacteria for every legume crop planted. It is the man who takes off the land every legume crop and returns nothing to the land that produced it and hence starves out the legumes in his soil who will have to resort to the cultures to get them back temporarily.

### Everbearing Strawberries

"LAST spring I set a bed of the Everbearing strawberries. We picked off the first blossoms and let them bear after that, and we had berries till freezing weather. We covered the bed with manure and straw, and this spring removed the straw and most of the manure. They made a luxuriant growth and made a good crop of berries and then stopped, and now there are no blossoms nor any prospect of any. What is the trouble? Can I remedy it?"

This is just my experience with the everbearing strawberries. After making a big early crop they go on a strike for weeks and do little later. I have found that the way to treat them is to grow them as annuals. That is, plant a bed every spring from the runners made the previous summer. Keep off the bloom till June and then let them bear till fall. Manure well and get the early crop the next spring and then turn the plants under for some later crop. The spring-planted bed will take their place, and the older ones are not worth keeping.



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