Our Farm Department

Devoted to the Interest of Those Who Till the Soil

CONDUCTED BY J. M. BEATY

GREEN FEED FOR HORSES AND MULES.

The farmer who gives a jerk to his horse or mule every time the animal reaches down for a weed or bunch of grass forgets that his stock was raised mostly on green grass. It is very natural for stock which had all the green feed they wanted so long to want some now. For years it has been our custom to feed green corn to mules and horses from about July 15th until frost and we have had no bad results from it. We start by giving only a small quantity at first and increase gradually. The green feed is given at night and the stock have digested it and are ready to work next morning. If a horse or mule is fed on it only once a day and that given for the night feed and plenty of other feed is given besides then no bad results can follow. So much other feed is not required when green corn is given. It is an economical feed as stock eat all that is thrown them, stalk, fodder, tassel, shuck, corn and cob. At this time of year stock to some extent are low in order on account of the hard work done during the spring and summer but they will fatten easily if fed green corn with other feed.

CLEAN THE CORN.

There is more grass in the fields now than for many years past. Most farmers are inclined to neglect their corn to work out the cotton fields. While much cotton has suffered on account of grass and some of it is still grassy, the greatest harm is to corn. Part of the corn which is laid by is very grassy. In some cases another shallow plowing would help greatly. Where this cannot be given a good hoeing is the next best thing to give it. All about can be seen corn grassy on the tops of the rows where the plows could not reach it as it was too large before the plowing was done. It would not take so long as some suppose to cut up that grass with the hoes and it should be cut. Now that the push of work is about over, this hoeing can be done. It will help the corn and add to the pea crop to remove this grass.

A YEAR TO WORK COTTON LATE.

Since improved farm methods have been adopted by so many farmers they plow cotton later than before. There is no work done which pays better than late plowing in the cotton fields provided it is shallow and does not tear up the roots. This applies to all years but it would seem to be of more than usual importance to plow late this year as the plants are so small for the time of year. Besides having had so much rain we look for more or less dry weather before the crop is matured and in that case late plowing would be essential to arrest the moisture where is could be used by the cotton plants. Keep in mind the fact that late plowing of crops is an important part of good farming. You would dislike to know later that your cotton yield was shortened for the want of another plowing.

Selling Cotton Ahead.

We learn that in the Robeson county section of the State a good many of the farmers are making contracts for the sale of their cotton of this year's crop. A few weeks ago a number of the planters sold their entire crop at ten cents per pound for fall delivery. A little later others sold at ten and a half cents. Since the last government crop report would-be purchasers are offering eleven cents and more. Of course those who have sold all they are to make at ten cents are mad because they did not hold off a little longer and get a cent and a half more, as those who sold later have done; but the probabilities are that the latter will also become discontented with their contracts for it now looks like those who secure this year's cotton at eleven and a half cents will be getting it cheap enough.

To sell cotton ahead of its production is a risky business. The farmer does not know whether he is going to gain or lose by it. He loses the opportunity to hold for a rise in price and there is no holding back of the product to prevent the market being affected by heavy receipts. Furthermore, the farmer does not know what it is going to cost him to make his cotton. Contingencies may arise before his crop is gathered which will greatly increase the cost per pound of cultivating and harvesting. And it is natural that it should cause discontent when he finds himself delivering his cotton on a contract made months before at a price much below that paid his neighbors on spot sales for their crops. Of course, should the price next fall be below that at which farmers have sold they will be just that much the gainers; but they should bear in mind that the people who at this time of the year are offering a certain price for cotton to be delivered next fall have made themselves thoroughly acquainted with all the conditions as to the crop and the supply and the demand that will exist next fall and feel sure that they are getting the cotton cheaper at the prices they are now offering than they would be able to buy it at the time of the maturity of the crop.

As we see the matter, farmers who sell now for delivery next fall may make by the transaction, but the odds are against them. It strikes us that on the whole it would be better for the farmer were the cotton crop not sold until it was actually produced and was then judiciously marketed—in such a way as not at any time to glut the market by spasmodic rushes of the commodity to the cotton centres.—Charlotte Observer.

Shredding Corn and the Value of Corn Stover.

It is time for our farmers to begin planning as to how they will save the forage grown in their corn fields; whether they will go on pulling fodder or cut and shred their stalks. It is a bad policy to waste anything, it is doubly bad in the Southern farmer not to utilize his corn stalks for the reason that he is short on feed stuff and pays higher for it than any other set of farmers, since he has to pay freight for hauling it so far. Now lets look into this matter a little. For every one hundred bushels of corn you grow the stalks will make two tons of stover, this stover is worth 60 per cent. of the value of Timothy Hay—our farmers have paid $24.00 per ton for it this year, this would make corn stover worth $14.40 is this not worth saving, after you have made it? $28.80 on every one hundred bushels of corn grown in the Southern States will mean something. Many will tell you, stock will not eat it—that your corn wil blow down in the field and injure. Stock will eat it as hundreds will testify. You must put some meal or bran over it as you would cottonseed hulls. Our own cows prefer the stover to cotton-seed hulls and it is a more nutritious food. Yet we buy millions of tons of cottonseed hulls at from $8.00 to $12.00 per ton. At the Virginia Experiment Station some steers were fed, using hay as roughage and then corn stover as roughage. Those receiving the hay gained 1.10 pounds per day; those receiving the stover gained .97 pounds per day. This is not a bad showing is it? The truth of the business is we are like a child throwing away quarters because he has some dollars. We need the corn and it is well worth growing, and we also need the stover. Any farmer can learn to so stack his corn that it will not fall down, by simply putting from 300 to 400 stalks in a shock and then tying it firmly. In truth all this is but a matter of education and we need the education and there is no time like "the eternal now," to set about getting it. Cut your corn and make your arrangements to shred it. If you don't feel able to buy one alone—several neighbors combine and get one, or let one buy and go around like a public thresh and shred for his neighbors. If you don't want a shredder get a large cutter. Save your stalks and feed them to your mules and cattle.—The Southern Cultivator.

Laying By Cotton.

With very many farmers the laying-by of cotton means simply the last of three or four plowings.

It should mean a great deal more—not the end of something, but the doing of something for a definite purpose.

With those for whom laying-by means simply that the crop is made, there is little distinction in the laying-by of different crops. This leads to much error in practice.

Corn is a rapid maturing, short season crop. From seed to seed covers an interval of about 100 days. Cotton is a slow maturing plant, requiring a long season. It continues to grow and make fruit for months after corn has been harvested.

It should require little reasoning to convince any one that two crops so unlike in habits and periods of growth should be laid-by very differently.

With cotton, laying-by is not the end but the beginning of the period for which the plant develops—the making of the fruit. It is this influence of laying-by on fruiting that demands special consideration.

The first point to fix in mind is the fact that laying by is not a date, a season or time of year, it is a condition of the crop.

The time to lay-by, therefore, is not on a certain day of the month, but at a certain condition in the growth of the cotton plant.

The appearance of mature bolls is the indication for laying-by. It means that growth is ended, development stops, maturing of fruit either already formed, or material for which has already been stored in the plant, is the future work of the plant.

In practice this means that very many farmers lay by too soon. It is a good general rule to continue to work cotton just as long as the team can pass between the rows without doing serious damage by breaking the plants.

The direct influence of laying-by—the stopping of cultivation—is exerted chiefly through its influence on the movement of soil water.

All intelligent farmers today know that surface cultivation conserves moisture—prevents waste of soil water by evaporation. They are equally aware of the reverse fact, that lack of cultivation hastens evaporation of soil water.

It is through these two facts that laying-by affects the crop. The question of practical importance is: How can this influence be exerted to the advantage of the crop?

Before this time growth—cotton plants—weed—is the chief object of cultivation. Now development—maturity—fruit is what is wanted.

The object sought being different, a change in treatment is necessary. This change is the stopping of cultivation. The soil instead of being kept mellow is alowed to pack—is laid-by.

The maturing of fruit—the ripening of plants— is largely a drying-out process. Ripe grain is dryer than green grain. Fruiting cotton is dryer than growing cotton. The process is aided by dryness of the soil. This dryness of the soil is increased by stopping cultivation—by laying-by.

This fruiting, ripening, drying process, however, may begin too soon or continue too fast. The early maturing of cotton—cutting short the crop—as the result of a late summer drought—is common evidenct of this fact.

It should not be allowed to begin till the normal growth of the plant is reached. This is the reason why late cultivation and late laying-by give best results.

These same facts have important bearing on the fertilizing of the crop. The frequent practice of using nitrate of soda as the sole fertilizer for late—laying-by—application, is serious error. It is easily seen that this course is directly opposed to the objects sought.

Nitrates make foliage--weed--nitrate of soda should be used earlier in the season, when weed is wanted. Its use at laying-by time continues the growth, increases weed, delays fruiting, and often results in "weed" at the expense of fruit.

Mineral fertilizers, phosphates and potash, on the otherhand, assist fruiting and are the best applications for laying-by time.

Shedding of cotton, so common a trouble in certain seasons and localities is materially influenced by the time of laying-by.

This trouble seems to be a condition of the plant rather than a particular disease. Its chief cause is irregularity, or deficiency, in the movement of soil water. It follows sudden extremes of water supply, either too much or too little. Thorough and late cultivation is the natural prevention. The surest protection against shedding is shallow cultivation, breaking of the surface crust, after each rain.

Late laying-by is cheap insurance against much shedding.--Southern Ruralist.

The New Tillage.

The one point on which all writers agree is the importance of shallow cultivation. The reason assigned by all is the protection thus afforded against drought.

So unanimous is this opinion and so general its present practice, that many are unaware of the comparatively recent origin of what is now so common.

A little reflection will show that cultivation for the conservation of soil water is a comparatively new thing. In every community may still be found a few farmers not yet followers of this practice. They are the less progressive and least successful members of their communities.

They are behind the times. That they are thus because they have not advanced, have not kept the pace, have not adopted new ideas and new methods, is certain.

Shallow cultivation—the dust mulch—is simply one of the new things not yet adopted by the few laggards.

It is new. Every man who farmed for a quarter of a century remembers when common practice was the reverse from that of today. Dry lands were not stirred unless weeds must be killed. Moist lands were cultivated—brought into contact with air—if the crop suffered from too much water.

A change came, radical, revolutionary. It reversed the accepted methods of the fathers. It become the practice of good farmers everywhere. It vanquished the terrors of drought, it made the era of "dry farming" in the once "Great American Desert" possible.

When did the new tillage begin, and who first suggested the now universal practice?

These are important questions on which we held definite convictions, but to which we desired positive and authoritative reply.

We were recently obliged, in complying with a request, to treat of this subject in the great Cyclopedia of Agriculture just published by Macmillan and Co.

That the best information might be secured we wrote letters to the United States Bureau of Soils and to the authors of most recent bulletins or other standard works on soils.

Replies were received to every letter, but not a single writer could definitely answer the question: when and by whom did the present practice of shallow cultivation for conservation of soil moisture originate?

These writers admitted that the practice first became common in the "eighties." Several cited books and bulletins appearing in the early nineties as the first definite formulation of the idea with which they were familiar.

We are therefore confident that we are correct in the following assertion:

The idea originated with Levi Stockbridge, then Professor of Agriculture in the Massachusetts Agricultural College. The first experiments proving the correctness of the theory were conducted at that institution in 1878. The first publication of the theory—announcement of the idea—was made in 1879 in a pamphlet entitled: "Investigations on Rainfall, Percolation and Evaporation of Water From the Soil."

The theory was stated as follows: "The water moves upward in fine tubes formed by the particles of soil; if the soil is compact, as when beaten down by rain, the tubes are perfect and the water moves upward to the surface rapidly; but if the tubes are broken up, the soil particles being separated by cultivation, the subsoil water must rise slowly, although the immediate surface is very dry."

The practical suggestion—the new idea—was:

"The lesson is, cultivate the land to save crops from the dire effects of drought."

This was the beginning of the new tillage.—Southern Ruralist.

Wheat and Other Grains.

The wheat prospects are such that there is no reason why flour should remain unusually high. But if Patten is the only man in the world who knows anything about wheat, and not only the stock brought over from last year, but the prospective harvest, is light, we may at least count on having plenty of Indian meal. The corn area is larger than ever before; the condition is good, and the crop may be the largest ever gathered. But in spite of Patten and prices the wheat prospects are excellent, and we shall probably harvest one of our largest crops, while oats promise to yield a far larger amount than ever before, and oats are more extensively used as human food than they were when Dr. Johnson defined the grain as "food for men in Scotland and horses in England."— Philadelphia Record.

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