

THE WATERDOWN REVIEW

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DRAIN THE HILLSIDES

Erosions Mean Considerable Loss to Many Farms.

Tilling, Open Ditching and Terracing Recommended—How to Plan and Do the Work—Why an Orchard Will Pay.

(Contributed by Ontario Department of Agriculture, Toronto.)

The erosion of hillsides and the flooding of the land below by the eroded material has long been a worry and an economical loss to many farmers in hilly and mountainous sections. This can frequently be prevented, and the method employed depends on the conditions existing, such as the nature of the soil; light or heavy, the steepness of the slope, and the type of agriculture practiced; pasture or tilled crops.

The Value of "Sheep-Drains."

Wet hillsides used as sheep pastures may be much improved by what are sometimes called "sheep-drains." These are merely shallow open ditches about 30 inches wide on top, 9 inches wide on the bottom, and 15 inches deep for removing the surface water. They are dug slantingly around the slope to intercept the flowing water and carry it in a definite channel to a suitable outlet at the base of the hill. The removed earth should be thrown out on the lower side to form a sort of embankment to the drain. The grade of the ditch should not be so steep as to give the water sufficient force to destroy the drain by either washing away the banks or digging the drain itself deeper, and thus making it dangerous for the sheep and lambs. Sub-drains are sometimes necessary.

Terracing and Draining.

A system of terracing is quite universally used to prevent destructive washouts on hillsides. The terraces are made perfectly level, and of any width, and then carefully seeded to grass. At the time of rain the water spreads out evenly over the surface of these and then flows gently over the slope below without sufficient force to wash away any portion of the hill and thus prevents "gullying."

For the drainage of tilled hillsides a system of under-drainage is sometimes used successfully. The amount of erosion of the land largely depends on its condition. If the surface soil can be kept firm the erosion will be lessened. Soft spots on the hillside, though, frequently occur as a result of seepage water from above which has penetrated the surface soil and reached an impervious layer and thus deflected to the surface on the side of the hill. Water flowing over this with considerable force will naturally wash it away more easily than the firmer soil free from this seepage water.

Advantage of Tile Draining.

If tile drains are so laid to intercept this seepage water, considerable erosion can be prevented. If the hillside is comparatively steep, drains laid at an angle to the incline will be more satisfactory. They will naturally intercept all of the water flowing through the soil above them. Also the grade will be less and the drains are not so liable to be affected by the water moving slowly through them. If the slope is not very steep the drains may be laid down the incline with satisfactory results. Here the tile drains the land on both sides and no double draining results.

In this underdrainage the general benefits are again obtained. The water level is lowered, thus giving more root capacity to plants and the prevention of surface washing by allowing the water to penetrate through the soil to the drains, thus carrying much plant food to the roots of the plants.—R. C. Moffatt, O. A. College, Guelph.

People on Farms Live the Longest.

Life on the farm is the healthiest and safest, according to statistics compiled by the United States Bureau of Labor showing the average age at death in various occupations. The farmer and farm laborer live longer than other workers. This does not "seem longer," which, it will be remembered, is the joint in the old joke concerning the longevity of married folk contrasted with bachelors and spinsters—it is longer, and official research records prove it. Farmers live to the average age of 58.5 years, blacksmiths are given three years less of life, and masons and bricklayers die at an average age of 55. The list tapers down to bookkeepers and office assistants who are given an average life of no more than 36.5 years.

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