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SUGGESTIONS

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Waterdown

INOCULATION OF SEED

Legume Bacteria for Enrichment
of the Soil.

Inoculation of Seed and Soil Describ-
ed—Clover, Alfalfa, Peas, Etc.,
Precursors of Good Crops—Some
Testimonials Offered.

(Contributed by Ontario Department of
Agriculture, Toronto.)

It has been known for centuries
that the soil of fields in which there
has been grown a good clover, pea
or other leguminous crop is richer
after the crop than it was before.
Hence the practice of having a clover
or other leguminous crop in the crop
rotation. Just why a good legumin-
ous crop was beneficial to the soil
was not known until a few years ago.
It was then found that certain spe-
cies of bacteria, which came to be
known as the "legume bacteria," en-
tered the roots of the legumes and
produced on them little swellings or
nodules. Wherever these nodules are
present in large numbers on the roots
of legumes a good crop is assured.
The combination of the legume bacte-
ria with the plant results in the
plant tissues, root, stem and leaf,
giving a larger and more vigorous
plant than in the case where the bacte-
ria are not present.

It has been found that different
varieties of legume bacteria are ne-
cessary for most of the various
legumes. The variety of bacteria
good for red and white clover is no
good for alfalfa or sweet clover; the
variety good for field peas is no good
for field beans, and the variety good
for field beans is no good for soy
beans, and so on with other legumes.

If any particular legume crop has
not been growing satisfactorily in
any particular field, it is question-
able if the right kind of legume bacte-
ria is present in the soil of that
field. So, before a satisfactory crop
can be grown the right bacteria have
to be introduced. For instance, the
cultivation of alfalfa is a new prac-
tice in many sections. If sweet
clover is common in the district it is
probable that the right bacteria are
there for alfalfa, as the variety good
for sweet clover is good for alfalfa.
If it is not present, it is doubtful if
a good crop will be grown; hence
the difficulty often met with in get-
ting alfalfa established in a new dis-
trict unless the bacteria are first
introduced. There are various ways
of introducing the bacteria. One is
to take a few loads of soil from a
field in which the bacteria are pres-
ent and scatter this over and work
it into the field to be treated. This
method was the first adopted. It is
not practicable, however, in most
cases.

Legume Seed Inoculation.—
Another way is to inoculate the seed
of the legume crop to be sown with
a pure culture of the right variety
of bacteria. When this is done, the
bacteria are on the surface of the
seed when it germinates in the soil
and so get into the young roots.
These cultures of legume bacteria are
prepared in bacteriological laborato-
ries and sold so much per culture.
They are known as nitro-cultures or
legume bacteria cultures, and vari-
ous other trade names have been
given to them. The Bacteriological
Laboratory of the Ontario Agricul-
tural College was the first to produce
these cultures satisfactorily for dis-
tribution on the American continent.
They are sold from the laboratory for
the nominal sum of 50 cents each,
to cover cost of material, container
and postage. Each culture is suffi-
cient for one bushel of seed. Thou-
sands are sent out annually to all
parts of Canada on application for
the same. Letters received from
those who have used these cultures
speak very highly of this method of
inoculation as shown by the following
excerpt:

Comox, B.C.: "In the spring of
1914 you sent me some alfalfa cul-
ture suitable for this district. After
two years, I have to report that the
inoculated patches have flourished
exceedingly well and are making
most luxuriant growth, entirely
crowding out the weeds and showing
a splendid color. The others which
were not inoculated have almost en-
tirely died out and the few plants
left were small and very pale. In
fact, I have recently ploughed them
up."

Edmonton, Alberta: "We made
many tests in Ontario which proved
to us that even alfalfa screenings
would produce a greater growth the
first and second year, after being
treated with the bacterial culture,
than the very best quality of alfalfa
seed would without treatment. We
have been using the bacteria here,
and have had a very good result the
first year."

Diameter of Pine Tree.

Mr. Hill, lockmaster at Buckhorn,
Ont., experimented with a pine tree
to determine improved growth which
may be secured by proper care. Fif-
teen years ago, he pruned all the
lower branches off a 4-inch white
pine sapling, removing other sap-
lings from its vicinity, dug up the
earth around it and applied manure
to its base. It is now 19 inches in
diameter at its base and has a long,
clean pole. Thus, during the fifteen
years, the growth in diameter has
averaged one inch annually. — Con-
servation.

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