

Growing and Handling Alfalfa

We have grown alfalfa more or less for the past 18 to 20 years. Our experience at the first was similar to many who are trying it at the present time. Not understanding it we did not like the results, but as we began to understand its nature of growth we liked it more. I do not think there is any one farm crop that will give the same results for the amount of work expended.

In the seeding much care ought to be put on the preparation of the soil and seed bed. We usually precede the seeding with a root crop, getting the ground in as a fine a tilth as possible. As a rule we seed with oats or barley, sow at least 20 lbs. to the acre and put the seeder in front of the drill. We get better results by sowing the seed in front of the hoes, as thereby we have the seed covered more deeply.

By a careful preparation of the soil giving it a good top growth, we are not troubled with the young clover being killed out by the dry weather after harvest as in the case of red clover the reason for this is apparent. At time of harvest the young alfalfa plant is from twelve to eighteen inches high and if one digs down he will find the root has reached further into the soil than the plant has upward. It very soon gets down to permanent moisture and is comparatively independent of dry weather.

After the nurse crop has been removed the young plant makes such rapid growth that it is very tempting to turn the stock onto it, but if it is pastured close or late in the fall the winter often kills it. We have discontinued pasturing it the first fall and allow the growth to remain for a winter protection until spring. Perhaps another point re the seeding would not be amiss before I speak of the after handling. Not a few in seeding alfalfa for the first time make the same mistake we made; for fear it would not come to anything, mix it with other grass seeds so if the lucerne did not grow there would still be a chance for a hay crop. This custom has been productive of much of the ill favor that has arisen against the plant. By the time the mixture of grass is ready the lucerne is like so much brush wood, not fit for anything; it has, to get the best results, to be grown alone. It is such people, people who have never understood how to handle it, who cry out that it is no good for hay, nothing will eat it, etc., etc.

MAKING THE HAY.

The very best of hay can be made of it and with as little

trouble as it is to save common red clover. In the first place and perhaps most important it must be cut early before it is in full bloom, when it is just commencing to bloom. In curing care must be taken not to allow it to become too dry. It is a very leafy plant and if it is allowed to get very dry the leaves will fall off, thereby losing much of the feeding value. We usually cut as soon as the dew is off in the morning and if possible get it into small coils before night. This cannot always be done, but our aim is to get it put up before the leaves fall. We coil it before it is quite dry, when it is still tough, leave it in the small coil several days where it is allowed to cure, then hauled to the barn or stack, and alfalfa or lucerne that is hand-

lent food during the growing stages of the hog, pork can be produced—we have done it—for 3c. per pound.

Though lucerne makes excellent hay and a good pasture it is as a soiling crop it excels. The fact that you can cut so much off an acre during the summer, also that it is ready to cut before anything else—we have cut it early in May measuring 2 ft. high—and the extra value of the fodder puts it pre-eminently the first soiling crop—three cuttings, sometimes four, can be taken per season.

We are beginning to learn that this is not a grazing country and to supply a green food during the dry season, when our ordinary pasture is done, is an important question with dairy men especially. With a field of alfalfa near the barns we are almost independent of rain fall, we can have the best of feed for our cows.

Though alfalfa will appreciate a fall of rain, there is no plant that will flourish as it does without rain. Our experience has been that it will produce more milk than any other pasture or fodder that can be fed.

Give it a trial. Get the very best seed, have the soil rich and in good condition. It will grow on any well drained soil. Be sure and cut it early and I don't know of anything that will give the results that alfalfa will.

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Cutting and Curing Clover

Before another issue reaches our readers many will have begun cutting the clover crop. This crop will not be as heavy as last year's. All the more need therefore to save it and to save it in the very best way. Most of the clover grown in this country is of the crimson variety. Alfalfa is obtaining a foothold in many sections. Elsewhere information is given as to the curing and handling of this crop.

Good weather is an important factor in the curing of the clover hay crop. With bad or wet weather it is almost impossible to make good clover hay. Given good weather a palatable and nutritious stock food can be obtained from the clover crop.

The best authorities state that about the best time to cut clover is when one-third of the clover heads are turning brown. If cut much before this stage the excess of water in the crop makes the process of hay making slow and unsatisfactory. If the cutting is delayed much after this stage the hay-making part is simplified, but the crop has lost much of its valuable protein and carbohydrates.

In making hay from clover great care should be exercised in preserving the finer parts of the plants,



A useful machine in haying and harvest.

led this way will come out fresh and green and so palatable that stock will frequently leave oat chop for it. We believe, and this opinion is held by others who have tested it, that well cured lucerne hay alone is just as good for working horses as timothy hay and oats. Chemists say a ton of it is equal in feeding value to a ton of bran, while in the Western States they put it equal to 2,800 lbs. of bran, but perhaps this bran is poorer than our bran.

AS A PASTURE AND SOILING CROP.

In pasturing lucerne it is well to remember two points—put the stock into it before it is too high and take them off before they eat it bare. Close pasturing will kill it. All stock like it and it produces abundance of good pasture. As a pasture for hogs it has no equal. By substituting alfalfa as a succu-