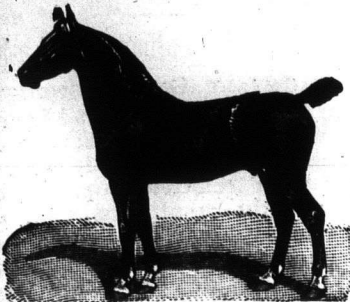


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About the Farm.

Alfalfa.

To the Home-Builders of Our State That
Are Settling Within Our Borders:

Heretofore I have written giving you
the benefit of my experience along cer-
tain farming lines in the West. I hope
the former advice has done some good
in assisting you to make a few mistakes
as possible so you will become firmly
and successfully established in our
young and most desirable state. This
time I will confine myself to giving you
what I think the best course to adopt
to start alfalfa successfully. Some
seeds and plants are advertised as
mortgage lifters, but if you get started
aright with this plant you will not have
such a disagreeable millstone galling
your neck.

The primitive home of this plant
seems to be in the arid or semi-arid
regions. It had such popularity in these
parts that the farmers in the humid sec-
tions introduced it as one of their prin-
cipal crops. Now from the Atlantic to
the Pacific it has spread with wonder-
ful success and advantage as a forage
plant to the farmer, even to the isles of
the sea, not overlooking the great con-
tinent of Australia. Never was a plant
known of such signal value to husband-
ry. What are its characteristics that
produce such widespread fame? Only a
few may be mentioned, as they are too
numerous to go into details. When it
is firmly established, it remains pro-
ductive perhaps for a century, and in-
stead of depleting the soil, it has the
faculty of nourishing it, which is con-
trary to most any other plant. It being
so deep-rooted, drawing its nourishment
from greater depths, bringing its fruits
to the surface for the support of man
and beast, even its flowers produce the
sweetest nectar that pleases the palate
of any epicure, it will even vie with
the orange and lemon in bringing ade-
quate returns to the tiller of the ground.
It produces the most gorgeous dyes that
the Persians can find to make their
adornment. Its leaves are used for the
healing of the people and our sheep
and kine fed on such forage will cap-
ture first prizes wherever shown. What
sight is more gorgeous than a field of
alfalfa in full bloom, with its grand, pur-
ple flowers, and the busy bee humming
and flitting from flower to flower drink-
ing in the sweet nectar to store for its
winter use. Our professors tell us it
possesses elements that will sustain hu-
man existence. Also from what I read
it is very highly recommended as one
of our most nourishing and choicest
breakfast dishes. Perhaps it was this
plant that Nebuchadnezzar grazed on for
seven years, and after all there may
not be any myth about the Biblical nar-
rative.

But I must proceed to the practical
part of the subject and give you the
benefit of my long experience in the
handling of this plant.

To be most successful with this plant
is to start the year previous to which
you wish to seed, cultivating a root
crop of some kind so the land will be
kept free from all kinds of weeds. We
will suppose you had your ground in
potatoes where you wish to seed al-
falfa.

The first thing to do is to investigate
your sub-soil. If of sand and gravel,
so much the better. This is the kind
the plant delights in; in fact, this is the
general character of our sub-soils
throughout this western region. Still
there are some we call hard pan, and
even clay will be met with. Either of
these sub-soils are unsuited to success-
ful alfalfa growing. Happily, these
conditions are seldom met with and
generally found along the margin of our
streams. Such might produce fairly
well with ample rainfall, but under ir-
rigation where so much water is gen-
erally used the ground gets over-sat-
urated and the soil becomes sour for
lack of aeration and the water intended
as support for the plant has become
poison to it.

When you have the desired sub-soil
you will look over your land and ob-

serve if there is any unevenness on it.
Most likely there is. Then plow the
knolls and take the Fresno scraper with
four good horses and scrape these down
a little lower than you think is right,
dumping into the depressions so as to
bring all the ground as uniform as pos-
sible. After this is done thoroughly,
take the leveler I have heretofore men-
tioned, or some other that will do ef-
fective work and go over the land and
level down the irregularities left from
the scraper. I want you to be most par-
ticular about this leveling. Remember,
this is an improvement on your farm
that will last for all time, and you may
let the alfalfa remain for five or twenty
years. Besides, it will save the wear
and tear on farm machinery and teams,
and, not least, you will be able to con-
duct the water over the land with
greater uniformity, thereby producing
better crops and with greater economy
of water.

Your ditches will have been previ-
ously cleaned of all trash that would
impede the flow of water. Now start the
water at the highest point of your land,
and don't be afraid to give the land a
good soaking; two or three feet deep
will not hurt. I am anxious you should
fill the sub-soil, and you will see that
the water covers every foot of the
ground; don't imagine it will soak up
to this or that part. Generally speak-
ing, it will not, as the water has a
downward tendency and in most cases
very little laterally. After you have done
ample justice to this part of the work
and have the land in suitable condition,
the spring harrow is the most suitable
to use. Let this cut three or four
inches deep. After this operation I use
what is called a pulverizer, which has
twenty knives set at an angle that pricks
the ground. On the same is attached a
bar with forty spike teeth. This breaks
the small lumps and makes the ground
fit for any vegetable garden.

You are now ready for seeding.
There is a diversity of opinion whether
a nurse crop should be used with alfalfa.
I have always adopted the nurse crop,
especially where you have command of
water at all times, but in seeding,
whether oats, barley or wheat as a nurse
crop, I only use about one-half the
amount as for ordinary seeding. I
should recommend about three pecks of
Kherson oats with the alfalfa. These
oats grow short and they mature early,
giving the young alfalfa still a good time
to get well established before winter and
at the same time you will get some re-
turn from the land the first season.
Now, as to the amount of alfalfa seed
to sow to the acre, this depends at least
on two things: the proper seed bed and
the quality of seed. If your seed bed is
as I have outlined and first-class seed,
from eight to ten pounds is ample for an
acre. I have seeded twenty-five pounds,
but the seed was of poor quality, and the
seeding on first breaking. Again, I have
used ten pounds and it appeared to me
the stand was on the thick side. Now
here is the maximum and minimum, so
leave the decision with you what amount
to sow. I use a press drill seeder, and
seed the oats and alfalfa at same time,
about two inches deep, but if you have
first-class seed, and by that I mean the
plump, well-filled kidney-shaped, having
a rich golden color and free from weed
seed.

Now you will see the advantage of
the former copious watering. Should
the season turn dry we have the mois-
ture stored in the soil to support the
tender rootlets as they make their down-
ward journey in quest of nourishment.
Again, should we have occasional show-
ers, so much the better, but the under-
ground being thoroughly saturated, will
obviate the necessity of irrigating so
early, so the plants will get well above
ground before the necessity of watering.
Don't water until there is evidence that
it needs water, which you will notice by
the color of the leaves beginning to
show the white feather, then give a
thorough watering from three to four
inches deep over surface. Had you
watered before the plants were above
ground, many of the weakest would

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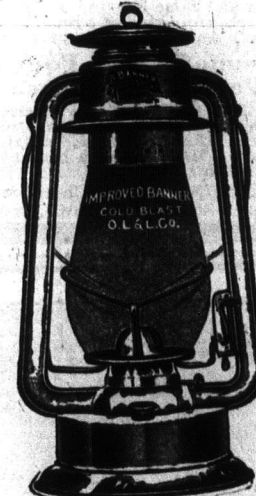
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