

THE LOCUST TREE.

AT Maplehurst we have a dozen fine old locust trees, the kind botanically known as *Robinia Pseudacacia*. They were planted over one hundred years ago by the first member of our family who purchased the old homestead, and they are such rapid growers that now they rival maples and elms of two or three times their age in the wood lot. They are interesting trees, and have some merit for ornament with their racemes of pea-like flowers in early spring and their delicately pinnate leaves. They grow to a lofty height and are not so dense in foliage as to hide distant views; yet as lawn trees they are not very popular, because they are inclined to sucker, they are late in foliage, and they make considerable litter both of flowers and leaves and broken boughs.

But as an investment, the growing of locust trees for fence posts on sandy soil would no doubt be a paying one, and we quote from the Vermont Experiment Station Bulletin a valuable extract on this subject:—

“Every farmer in New England ought to produce posts for his own use at least if not to sell. There are three common trees especially suited for posts—the Red Cedar (*juniper*), the White Cedar (*arbor vitæ*), and the common Locust (black or yellow locust). The last will make the quickest growth, is easily started, and best adapted to otherwise worthless soils. Good locust posts will usually be standing long after the man who sets them is gone.

“Believing that the growing of locusts on a fairly large scale for sale as posts ought to prove profitable, the Vermont Experiment station has recently been investigating the question and started some experimental plantations. Preliminary plantings of some nine varieties of trees have been made at intervals since 1897. The outcome is especially favorable in the case of the white pines and the locusts, and a considerable larger plantation of each of these was made in 1902. This trial is being made on the

dryest area of the level sand plain east of Burlington. Pitch pine is the only tree that makes a vigorous natural growth here, although the white pine succeeds fairly well when planted. The locust far outstrips all others, however. Of several thousand seedlings set last spring, when less than a foot high, ninety-two per cent. are now alive and three feet or more in height with leafy branching tops. Seedling trees near by in exactly similar soil have a trunk diameter of five inches and a height of sixteen feet at eleven years of age; others nineteen years old, growing in equally sandy but moister soil are averaging nine inches in diameter at the base, and a clean shaft of twenty-four or more feet, which is sufficient for three fence posts and some fire wood besides. Twenty years from seed will give a crop fit for posts on this last soil, and the coppice growth, following the cutting of the first crop, will ensure a second crop in even less time. The seedling trees cost only \$3.50 per thousand, and can probably be raised at a less expense. Allowing 1000 such trees per acre yielding three posts each once in twenty years, a handsome return is assured. The serious danger and source of uncertainty in locust culture is the borer. Fortunately its worst attacks are confined to the young trees, and if these survive then the danger is soon outgrown. It is said that the use of heavier foliaged trees for one-third the plantation in mixtures with the locusts, will reduce this danger from borers. White pine is considered the best tree for this purpose in sandy soil. The reason for the especial success of the locust on barren soil is that as a member of the pea family it secures its nitrogen indirectly from the air. It thus gains its own supply of this element, and at the same time enriches the soil where it grows. This latter result is shown by the fact that grass around locust trees may appear even greener and more luxuriant than in the open field.”