

September 4, 1918

Field Crops

Liming for Clover

In bulletin No. 212 of the Indiana Experiment Station, the following summary is made concerning the value of lime for growing clover:

Clover will not thrive on acid soils. Liming is the only practical means of correcting soil acidity.

Three-fourths of the soils of Indiana are acid and in need of liming.

About one-fourth of our soils is so very acid that clover fails almost every time it is sown.

About one-half of our soils is of slight to medium acidity and clover will fail whenever the weather conditions are at all unfavorable.

Only about one-fourth of the soils of Indiana is well enough supplied with lime to enable clover to develop properly.

A liberal application of pulverized limestone or some other form of lime is needed to insure a clover crop on any acid soil.

Wherever clover fails to thrive, the soil should be tested for acidity.

If the soil is acid enough to need liming at all, at least two tons per acre of ground limestone or its equivalent in other forms of lime should be applied.

Ground limestone may be applied at any time, but the best plan is to apply it on plowed ground and disc it into the surface soil.

Lime will often produce immediate increases in grain and other crops, but the greatest benefit derived from it comes through increasing clover and other legumes in the rotation.

Following a good clover crop, it is possible to grow good grain or other crops.

The greater the proportion of legumes that can be turned under, either directly or in the form of manure, the easier it will be to maintain the fertility of the soil.

Lime is not a fertilizer. Manure or fertilizer, or both, should be used in addition to lime.

On seven experiment fields in different parts of the state, ground limestone has produced crop increases worth from \$10.50 to \$67.70 per acre per rotation of corn, wheat, and clover. The average net profit has been \$6.78 per acre per year, and \$2.68 per dollar invested.

Sweet Clover

The value of sweet clover as a forage crop has never been fully appreciated. It is a biennial with a strong tap-root and leafy stems. These two characteristics make it especially valuable, that is to say, the long tap-root means it is a deep feeder and able to draw its moisture from a considerable depth, and the leafy stem provides an abundance of edible material. There has been a good deal of prejudice against the plant, many claiming it is a noxious weed. This is largely due to the fact that it is found growing in waste places and spreads rapidly. In many sections the prevailing opinion is that it is not relished by farm animals. All these

claims are more or less justified under certain conditions. At the same time, where it has been tried out the popular opinion is that it is a plant that deserves consideration. Possibly the greatest value of sweet clover is as a soil builder. Being a legume it is capable of building up nitrogen in the soil. The rank growth of stems and roots adds greatly to the humus supply and the roots have the additional value of opening up a heavy soil, making it more friable and porous. It grows readily on almost any soil and will thrive when practically nothing else will grow.

Its value as a forage crop has only been discovered in recent years. When the crop has been cut for hay at the right stage of maturity and properly cured it makes excellent hay. The stems are large and exceedingly sappy which

renders it difficult to cure unless favorable weather prevails. The crop must be cut before the stem becomes woody, and it is right here that the greatest mistake has been made in connection with the growing of this crop. The crop should be cut in the early stages of blossoming, otherwise it is not palatable. Its peculiar flavor is

distasteful to stock at first, but it is claimed by those who have fed it that this is soon overcome.

As a pasture crop sweet clover is very valuable. The writer saw this year a 14-acre field that was pasturing 22 head of cattle, and the stock apparently took kindly to it, and judging by the condition of the animals it was a satisfactory pasture crop. It is true it was commencing to get woody, but as the shooting stems and leaves were eaten off the young fresh growth came along and provided an appetizing bite.

Keep Weeds in Check

It is not uncommon to hear the statement that after all weeds are not such a detriment to a crop as is generally supposed. Such a suggestion usually comes from those whose farms are so badly polluted with them that some sort of an excuse must be handed out to justify their existence. Their claim is backed up by such arguments as: weeds prevent grain from lodging; they make more thorough cultivation necessary which would not otherwise be done if the weeds were not in the land, and other reasons that are equally unsound. They are pretty much in the same class as the man who in order to impress his neighboring farmers that he had a wonderful crop, filled the bottom of his wagon box with a very deep layer of hay then threw on a few bags of grain and made ten trips to the market, when in reality four loads of grain was the extent of his crop. He was deceiving no one but himself.

The injury done by weeds in the crop very much over-balances any assumed benefit credited to them. The two most important factors in connection with plant growth are moisture and plant food. Weeds draw heavily upon the available soil moisture and they feed upon the same kinds of plant



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