

How to Kill the Weeds.

The Neopawa Press gave the following report of the address at that place by Dr. Fletcher, of the Dominion Experimental farm staff, on weeds.

Prof. Fletcher in his two hours' speech, gave more information than could be gained in a lifetime by ordinary experience. He had there with him specimens of the weeds that grow in Manitoba. The Dr. stated that the agitation aroused a few years ago over the invasion of our fair province by the Russian thistle was one of the best things that ever happened as it aroused farmers to take in the situation clearly and to form ways and means to ward off and exterminate those pests of farmers—weeds.

The system calling into existence weed inspectors was good, but the speaker had found that as a rule most of those officials did not recognise those weeds; often confounded a bad weed for a comparatively harmless one, the result being no end of loss of time, money, and labor. Another question the speaker laid emphasis on was the time of summer fallowing, stating that judging by the state of the weeds being plowed down, summer fallowing in the majority of cases was being done too late in the season. He also exposed the fallacy of using weeds as green manure, the notion which many a farmer lays to his heart. He mentioned a farmer that left a strip of weeds to seed down every year in order to obtain a supply of green manure and stated that the only plants that were suitable for green manure were the clovers, the weeds not giving back to the soil nearly as much as they took out. The speaker then showed the evil tendencies of weeds. They rob the soil of its fertility, steal moisture, in fact are enemies to cultivation, and also depreciate a farm's value. A farm that has the reputation of being a weedy farm is hard to sell. The speaker also explained that the teaching intended to be carried on in schools was not botany, but plant life, with the idea of familiarizing children with the weeds and plants common to the country.

Dr. Fletcher said we might divide weeds into two classes—weeds and weedy plants. He stated the dangerous weeds were the imported ones; mentioned cases of certain bad weeds being grown as crop plants owing to the ignorance regarding them. As an illustration he mentioned yarrow or mill-foil, to be seen advertised as sheep parsley in English seed catalogues which is totally worthless as sheep will not eat it. He mentioned the case of the Brassey farm, Indian Head, where out of 2,000 acres of wheat, 1,200 was spoilt by the tumbling mustard, a bad weed, but which had unfortunately been let go for a few years under the impression that it was the tumbling weed. To see the two weeds is to notice a big difference, and it is better in Manitoba at all events to give the land and not a weed the benefit of any doubt.

The four bad weeds are:

Ball mustard (false flax), a weed which outrivals the stink weed for smell.

Tumbling mustard, a very bad weed, to be seen at Carberry.

Hare's ear mustard, called thus owing to the shag of the leaves, a bad weed. It is not black mustard as it is sometimes called.

Russian thistle, or Russian tumble weed. Other bad weeds shown were:

Wild sago, which proves troublesome in pastures. It has light feathery seed. The method to eradicate it is to break up the pasture.

Bull thistle, a weed not found on cultivated land.

Wild sunflower grows on low lands, wet years favorable, lies in the soil for years. Summer fallowing is the way to exterminate.

Fireweed (Canada flea bane), soon in large quantities on summer fallowing. Should be plowed down early. It is a mistake to leave fireweed for green manure as it is valueless for that purpose.

Lamb's quarter—not a very bad weed.

Tansy mustard, a native; not very bad. It is a handy weed for lazy people; grows high enough so as to save bending the back to pull it out.

Shopphard's purse, a biennial, is bad in gardens; requires constant cultivation to eradicate.

Canada thistles—deep roots, must be kept down; cut just as it comes flower; after that prevent forming leaves, whereby it gets its sustenance.

Blue flower plant milky juice exudes on squeezing. It has a deep root; grows on alkali spots.

Wild mustard, so called, is really bird rape. It is of smooth stem, full pods, thus differing from the real wild mustard, which has rough stems; pod one-third empty. It is seen in Ontario and Red River Valley. It needs strict attention.

Wild oats, three varieties—It is not hard to get rid of; cut early and make hay of it; then summer fallow. If a field is infested sow early Odessa barley and make hay, etc., as above.

Wild flax—not bad, but must not be confounded with false flax (bastard flax or ball or ball mustard) which is such a bad smelling weed.

Tumbling weed (true) turns to a white color as it ripens; not hard to kill; has red root; not dangerous but has been mistaken for the Russian thistle, is bad for scaring horses.

Door weed (Polygonum Erection), Indians call it white man's footstep; found along trails, seen in yards; cattle eat it readily; comparatively harmless.

Russian pig weed grows in waste places, round manure heaps, etc. It is really a weedy plant.

Blue burr, a very small burr, hard to get rid of. Ripens seed early; to kill must summer fallow early. It is very bad when it gets among sheep.

Quack grass—not bad here owing to the shallow plowing; bad in Ontario as the deep plowing keeps replanting it.

Sweet grass grows deeper than quack grass, so it requires different treatment.

Pepper grass grows in wet years on light soils; bad, chokes out the wheat. It grows one plant early in the season and a second partially grown by fall. Disc harrow so as to kill the immature plant.

The doctor stated that black mustard (real) is scarce in this country, but has been mistaken for the tumbling mustard (a bad weed.) He advised people not to grow the ox-eye daisy, as it had become a curse in Ontario, Quebec and the lower provinces: He stated that the leaves were the stomachs not the lungs of plants, hence the importance of preventing weeds forming leaves, e.g., Canada thistles. He recommended a systematic study of weeds as being of great benefit to the farmer. The speaker mentioned the stink weed nursing system in Winnipeg where they pull it up, put on the streets to ripen and thus assist it to be spread all over the country.

When Prof. Fletcher had concluded his address, Mr. D. Munroe, after a few complimentary remarks, moved a vote of thanks, which was carried by applause. Before putting the motion, W. P. Sirrett, M.P.P., who occupied the chair in the absence of President Molland, also spoke highly of the lecture.

After adjournment Professor Fletcher kindly labelled all the specimens of weeds brought in and Secretary Drysdale took charge of them; so that members of the institute may have some guide in determining which are dangerous and which are harmless weeds.

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