

All field crops will be judged from the standpoint of utility for seed purposes by expert judges furnished by the Seed Division of the Dominion Department of Agriculture. It is the intention to have a competition for sweepstakes prizes from the different competing societies at the Guelph Winter Fair, and also one for individual competition in each society.

Entries in the regular competition must be forwarded to J. Locke Wilson, Superintendent of Agricultural Societies, Parliament Buildings, Toronto, before June 15th, 1907.

Rape and Rape Growing

With the closing of a very long season of winter feeding, we find ourselves face to face with the problem of providing a suitable green crop for summer and fall pasture. With some, this may only be required in the event of a dry summer, but the majority of farmers have found it wise to make some such provision every year, and the land set apart for this purpose is frequently found to be the most profitable on the farm.

There are many crops which may be sown for this purpose with equally good results, but there is one, the merits of which I think are not sufficiently recognized. I speak of rape, which in my experience has proven the most valuable, for various reasons of any crop tried, on account of its providing excellent pasture until late in the fall and also because I found it very useful in cleaning the land. It does not, however, provide a palatable food for milk cows, owing to its flavoring the milk and butter similarly to turnip tops, but for dry cattle, sheep and hogs, it stands in my mind at the top of the list, furnishing an abundant supply from the end of July until the snow falls, and even later, if cattle have their liberty.

Rape may be harvested by cutting with a scythe and throwing in small heaps, which are then turned over as required, but if frost should be allowed to remain in the stable until thawed before being fed. Animals should not be turned on rape while it is frozen or even wet, unless they have previously had freedom to it.

SEEDING

The expense of seeding with rape is very trifling, as seed costs but about 10 cents per pound, and from 2 to 3 pounds is sufficient for an acre, providing it is sown in drills, which is generally acknowledged to be the proper way to sow it. Any soil which will produce a good crop of turnips will give a good crop of rape. The preparation should be much the same, although personally I have usually sown rape on ground so much over-run with weeds as to be unfit for spring crop. This is where I found one great advantage from the crop. I would work the ground over or twice before or during seeding, then after seeding give it a good fall special work, and sow it with rape in drills about two feet apart. By this means I could keep the ground worked with the scuffle or horse hoe, until the rape had it covered over. With suitable growing weather, this requires about a month or six weeks.

Where ground is moderately strong, and has been well prepared, rape usually grows from two feet to thirty inches high, and is fully ready to either cut and haul to the stable or turn stock on at from six to eight weeks after sowing. If intended for pasture stock should be on it at eight weeks, and if the larger leaved rape is cut off at this time, a fresh, tender crop will quickly follow. More and better pasture is obtained in this way than if left untouched until fall. Rape may be sown with a

fair chance of success any time from the 30th of May until the middle of July, but I think it is usually best to sow about the 10th of June.

RAPE FOR HOGS

Several have complained that they have tried growing rape for hogs, and found that when turned on they refused to eat it. I had this happen but once, and believe the cause was that the rape had been sown too early, both ground and weather being cold and the crop came on very slowly. The plants did not grow the size they should, they had a shriveled appearance and were a bad color. The hogs took to it in time, but not with the same relish they did when grown rapidly.

For a crop to turn lambs on at weaning time or to fatten old sheep, I have never found anything to equal rape. They will grow and fatten, and if a little grain is added late in the fall, or about the time they are brought in there is no trouble in having them prime for Christmas.

But it is as a hog pasture that I have found rape most useful. I now consider it almost indispensable to the success of the business. An acre of rape to every twenty or twenty-five hogs saves at least half the grain for from two to two and a half months, while they are growing. Besides it saves labor and makes stronger and thriftier hogs than any other pasture. Hogs will live and grow fairly well for this period on rape alone, without the addition of any grain, but a small feed of grain once a day while they are on it pays well in the end. They do much better on it, and what grain is fed them is more than saved during the finishing period. Brood sows, however, not suckling, do quite well enough without any grain.

Pigs that are to be turned on rape, either for part or for their entire living, should not be taken from their pens and turned on it to subsist at once. It is much better to cut the rape and feed it in the pen or yard for a week or ten days, giving the hogs just what they will eat up quickly, and each day their grain ration should be lessened and the green feed increased. If this plan is followed there will be no great falling away in flesh nor any difficulty in getting them to rustle in the rape field for a living. F. W. S.

Alfalfa

The fundamental principle of maintaining fertility is to restore to the land annually those chemical elements taken from it by the crops grown. In Europe and more especially in Great Britain, much of the land has been under cultivation for over eight hundred years, and is more productive now than ever in its history, because necessity has compelled the observance of the natural laws which govern this principle.

Alfalfa ranks as one of the greatest fertilizing plants known to scientific agriculture. All cereal crops use large quantities of nitrogen. A field cropped for years in corn or wheat will come to have too little nitrogen for the production of a profitable crop. Alfalfa, with the aid of certain bacteria, after the first few months of its life, obtains the greater part of its supply of nitrogen from the air; in fact, more than it really needs. As a soil improver it possesses at least five valuable properties.

1. It gathers nitrogen from the air for its own maintenance, and this, upon the decomposition of the plant, is available in the soil.

2. It is a deep feeder and its roots penetrate the earth to extraordinary depths, drawing toward the surface and

utilizing moisture and valuable mineral elements that other crops would never reach, leaving the desirable elements there for future crops, of whatever kinds.

3. Its roots and rootlets draw up moisture from below the surface until it modifies the very top soil, changing wonderfully the nature of the field. The analysis of a cubic foot of earth of a flourishing alfalfa field shows a marvelous change in moisture content as the plants develop.

4. The mechanical effect of the extensive root system can scarcely be overestimated. As soon as germination begins the plant starts its tiny roots downward on the search for moisture. Roots four feet long have been found on alfalfa but four months old, roots nine feet long have been found on alfalfa but nine months old. After the tap root reaches a few inches below the surface, it sends out smaller roots that have a lateral growth of but a few inches, when they too take a downward course for moisture and for mineral elements needed for the growth above. These first smaller roots decay and others start out from the tap root lower down. They decay and still others start. The decaying roots add humus to the soil, and the openings left by them form a wonderful system of channels for the penetration of air and water into the soil. The erstwhile compact earth is honeycombed and air and water penetrate the channels made by the dead roots until, when the alfalfa is ready to be used for a different crop, the soil has been wonderfully changed not only in its chemical elements but in its physical character.

Grain Seed for the Far North

The Dominion Government has secured a farm for experimental purposes six hundred miles from Edmonton, and will this summer conduct a series of grain growing experiments to test the possibilities of the soil and climate. Dr. Saunders, Director of the Dominion Experiment Station, has received some samples of hardy grains grown in Thibet, 13,000 feet above the sea level. Among these are some samples of wheat which will be experimented with this year, with a view to obtaining seed grain suitable to these northern regions.

Farmers' Institute Excursions

The farmers' institute excursions to the Ontario Agricultural College, held during June, furnish a splendid outing for farmers. The college farm is then looking its best and the various crops can be studied with some degree of intelligence, though it is doubtful, owing to the backward spring, that savings will be as far advanced this year as during other seasons. The excursions so far arranged for this year begin on June 7th and continue till June 28th, and are as follows. Others may be arranged later:

June 7, W. Middlesex; June 8, S. Grey and E. Wellington (Mt. Forest only), Lincoln; June 10, C. Wellington; June 10, E. Elgin, E. and W. Peterboro and E. Durham; June 11, S. Grey, N. York; June 14, E. and W. Lambton; N. and S. Waterloo; June 15, Halton; June 17, S. Ontario and W. Durham; E. Simcoe; June 18, N. and S. Brant, Welland, N. and W. York; June 19, Haldimand, S. Oxford, W. York; June 20, W. Wellington, E. Middlesex, Dufferin and E. Wellington; June 21, E. York, S. and E. Huron; June 24, N. Oxford, N. Ontario, N. and W. Bruce and N. Grey; June 25, S. Grey, S. Middlesex, N. Perth; June 26, Peel, C. Grey; June 27, E. Parry Sound, S. Perth; June 28, S. Simcoe, W. Simcoe.



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