

The Growing of Flax

The growing of flax is yearly becoming more extensive in the West. In the province of Saskatchewan, particularly, many farmers have realized enormous profits from flax crops in the past few years.

The enormous quantity of linseed oil consumed now-a-days and the many linen manufacturing companies that are in operation, combined with the failure of the flax crops in many of the older districts of the United States has affected the price for the raw material, and made flax a profitable grain to grow in the West. No other grain has shown greater gains in price in one year than has flax this season. Fourteen months ago farmers netted about \$1.40 per bushel for flax seed. This fell from \$2.00 to \$2.50 per bushel was paid for flax. At the latter figure an acre of land yielding, say, twenty bushels of flax means that the crop is worth \$50.00. This is indeed a very high estimate, but it is conclusive proof that profitable returns can be made out of flax so long as the price remains anywhere near the present figures. The Winnipeg market price at the time this article was written was \$2.35 per bushel. Not only is there a large profit in flax seed, but the straw is a very valuable commodity, and should linen factories be established in this country, it would greatly increase the value of the flax crop to the farmer. A movement was set on foot some eight months ago to establish a factory in Winnipeg, and in all probability, the scheme will be carried out the ensuing season.

"Flax Sick" Soil

Many farmers have refrained from the growing of flax for the simple reason that it is supposed to impoverish the soil. In the United States a condition of the soil known as "flax sick" has prevailed in many sections of the country, to such an extent as to cause the abandonment of flax as a crop. On such soils, flax plants are attacked at any age, and die early or late, according to the time and the intensity of the attack. Many of the plants in an aggravated attack are killed before they appear above the surface of the ground. Such field spots become centres of disease; they enlarge throughout the summer, and new plants sicken, wilt, and die around their margins, finally giving the entire field a spotted appearance. Young plants wilt suddenly, dry up, or decay if the weather is moist. Older woody plants become sickly and weak, turn yellow, wilt at the top, and die slowly. Such plants are easily pulled up, owing to their decayed root system.

Most of the roots of diseased plants are dead and have a characteristic ashen-gray color. If the plant is attacked late in the season, this gray color may be limited to one side only of the taproot. In such cases the leaves and branches on the affected side are blighted. If the disease is sown with the seed upon healthy soil, only a few plants may be attacked during the first year, and such plants may be very unevenly scattered throughout the field and escape notice until late in the season.

If the weather favors the disease, each new era of infection may increase sufficiently to reach plants in several adjacent drill rows. These infection areas are nearly always circular, and enlarge each year that flax is grown thereon. A disease spot a half foot in diameter the first year may become two-thirds of a foot the second year. Thus only a few years are required for the disease to gain complete possession of a field. The disease not only persists in a field not sown to flax, but the disease areas may even enlarge when no flax is present. When soil is once infected, no way is known to render it suitable for flax again.

How the Disease Spreads

This is essentially a soil disease, but it is spread in the ways suggested under soil diseases, notably by soil particles, drainage water, and especially diseased flax straw which may get into the manure. The chief agent of dissemination, however, is the seed. In threshing, the spores of the causal fungus, which are abundant upon the dead straw, find lodgment upon the seed, especially if it be moist.

To prevent carrying the disease to land yet uninfected, all seed should be disinfected in the following manner:—

Use formaldehyde at the rate of 1 pound to 40 or 45 gallons of water. Spread the seed upon a tight floor or canvas and sprinkle or spray upon it a small amount

The Grain Growers' Guide

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Published under the auspices and employed as the Official Organ of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, and the United Farmers of Alberta.

THE GUIDE IS DESIGNED TO GIVE UNCOLORED NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF THOUGHT AND ACTION and honest opinions thereon, with the object of aiding our people to form correct views upon economic, social and moral questions, so that the growth of society may continually be in the direction of more equitable, kinder and wiser relations between its members, resulting in the widest possible increase and diffusion of material prosperity, intellectual development, right living, health and happiness.

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Canadian Subscriptions, \$1.00 per year in advance. Foreign Subscriptions, \$1.50 per year in advance. Single Copy, 5 cents.

Advertising Rates may be had upon application.

Change of advertising copy and New Matter must be received not later than Friday noon each week to ensure insertion.

Published every Wednesday at Winnipeg, Canada. Authorized by the Postmaster-General, Ottawa, Canada, for transmission as second class mail matter.

Address all communications, upon whatever subject, to The Grain Growers' Guide, Winnipeg. Do not send anything but personal letters to individuals.

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of the liquid. Shovel, hoe, or rake the grain over rapidly. Repeat this spraying, shoveling, and raking until all of the seeds are evenly moistened, yet not wet enough to mat or gum together. Continue to stir the grain, so that the mass may become dry as soon as possible. Avoid any excess of moisture. If flax seeds are dipped in the solution or are allowed to become wet enough to soften the coats so that they stick together, they will be considerably injured or even killed.

The solution mentioned is strong enough to kill all seeds if they are made thoroughly wet or are allowed to stay quite damp for some hours. Less than one-half gallon of solution is required to treat one bushel of seed. It is well also to burn all the infected straw and to avoid planting too deep.

Soil Preparation

Flax is frequently grown on spring breaking for the reason that it can be sown later than other grains and frequently good crops have been harvested, but as flax is a particular feeder, taking most of its food from the soil in the first month or six weeks of its growth, a well prepared, mellow, seed-bed is advisable and in bringing this about early fall plowing that has been packed and well harrowed is helpful. Flax is rather slow to sprout and for this reason should be sown when the land is in good moist condition so as the weeds will not get a start of the crop. Two pecks per acre is about the desired quantity to sow.

In Saskatchewan and Alberta flax has been sown with oats with good success, especially on heavy land that oat crops will frequently lodge. The oats are sown first and when the plants are up between three and four inches the flax is sown. In this way lodging is prevented to a great extent as the flax straw is stiff and strong and holds the oats up. Both grains are threshed together and the flax can then be readily separated from the oats by the fanning mill. To my knowledge, this experiment has not been tried with wheat on summer fallowed land that has a tendency to lodge, but it would no doubt prove as successful with the wheat as the oats. Both grains could be sold together and separated at Fort William. If any of the Western farmers have tried growing flax with wheat the Grain Growers' Guide would be pleased to hear from them as to the merits of the system.

A STARTLING STATEMENT

It has been said by those who have investigated the matter carefully that, although at the age of 45 fully 80 per cent. of men are established in whatever pursuit they follow and are in receipt of incomes in excess of their expenditure, at the age of 60 it has been found that 95 per cent. are dependent upon their daily earnings, or upon their children for support. Many, no doubt, read the despatch from Detroit which recently appeared in the Canadian papers and which described the condition of a man who but a little more than forty years ago was a "financial power" in that city, who had a "palatial home" on one of the most fashionable thoroughfares, entertained lavishly and to whom every person, high and low, was prepared to pay homage. But the fates were against him. He suffered serious financial losses, and when he began to go down hill he found it was properly greased for the occasion. His friends deserted him like rats from a sinking ship, and now at 80 years of age, after his day's labor, he wends his way to the city with the bent, broken down old men who have influence enough to have their names on the city's pay roll.

The moral is that out of your abundance something should be laid aside for declining years, and invested where thieves cannot reach it and where one cannot be deprived of it in any possible way. This means is afforded you under the Canadian Government Annuities act which the Parliament of Canada passed in the session of 1908, and which received the unanimous support of both sides of the House.

You may get all information by applying at the Post Office, or by addressing the Superintendent of Annuities, Ottawa.

Don't dismantle the engine entirely if it refuses to start. You may find that you have not turned on the switch of the gasoline.