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THE WEEDS OF ONTARIO AND HOW TO CHECK THEM

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Persistent Nuisances that Demand Persistent Efforts for their Control—The Farmer, the Municipality and the Government Must Work Together in the Fight Against Them

PERHAPS never in the history of farming in this province have the farmers been more awake to the danger of noxious weed life than now. Not only are weeds a topic of conversation for the farmer, but the commercial traveller, the tourist and nearly everyone who goes through the country, village, town, or city, remarks on the prevalence of weeds and suggests that something more should be done to prevent their spread. In this article the object is to give the names of a few of our worst weeds, and to say something about their distribution and the means already available, or that might be used for their extermination.

TWITCH OR COUCH GRASS

Perhaps the most cosmopolitan weed we have in the Province is one that is known by a variety of names such as quack, couch, scutch and twitch grass. When once located in the soil in quantity it is very hard to eradicate; in fact, it is almost impossible to get free of all the underground stems as they will lurk along the fences, around stumps and stone piles, and are trailed by the implements of cultivation out into the fields. It only requires a year or two in grass for it to spread and get a pretty good hold of the soil again after it has been almost cleaned out. It requires very persistent and thorough cultivation to kill it; such as a bare fallow, hoe crops, part fallow and the buckwheat crop or millet, or some smothering process, as plowing down deeply, or plowing under buckwheat, etc. Its wide distribution has doubtless been effected through commerce in hay. It is an early maturing plant and is often fully seeded when timothy hay is cut. When this is the case the seeds of the couch grass shake out and in numerous ways get mixed with the stable manure and in this way reach the fields and pollute them as certainly as though the stems themselves had been trailed around. A simple remedy or preventing its distribution by seeds would be to cut hay containing this plant in quantity, early, before the seeds have ripened sufficiently to prove vital.

What has been said about couch grass and its distribution may be remarked about a number of other weeds more or less noxious with certain modifications.

TWO THISTLES

There are two thistles, which also have a very wide distribution viz: the Canada Thistle and

the Perennial Sow Thistle. Of these two the Canada Thistle seems to be quite easily controlled by the clover plant where it is used frequently in a rotation. The Perennial Sow Thistle is more persistent but does not thrive so well in as great a variety of soils. The latter has a great affinity for heavy soils, as clays and clay loams. It is much harder to eradicate than the Canada Thistle. The wind distributes the seeds of both these plants in great quantities every year. Perhaps there is no weed which has spread more rapidly during recent years than this Perennial Sow Thistle which to-day is so much in the farmer's eye, as well as on his mind. It would

distribution has been facilitated mostly by commerce in hay containing it, and in seeds, both small and large. There is no law at present to check its spread in any way, and certainly it should be added to the twenty-three black listed weeds of the Dominion Law, known as the Seed Control Act.

HIND WEED

Field Bindweed or wild morning glory, is perhaps the most obstinate weed we have to dislodge from the soil and it can be found in small patches in nearly every community, yet it is not a very rapid spreader. It should be better known by farmers, and its eradication effected by very thorough cultivation, smothering processes, etc.

We need not refer to the host of other weeds more or less common in our cultivated fields as wild mustard, worm seed mustard, ragweed, catchfly, false flax, fibgrass, burrs, wild oats, etc, all of which may be held in check or entirely eradicated by a proper rotation of crops, thorough cultivation of soil and the use of pure seed.

WEEDS IN WASTE PLACES

Besides the weeds which flourish more or less in the cultivated crops, there are those which are road side, waste place and broken land commoners. Most of them are unsightly, very hard to eradicate and are rapid spreaders. Among the worst are the ox-eye daisy, chickory, blue weed, orange hawk weed. Less frequently seen, are elacampagne and teasel. Neglect in preventing them going to seed on the public highways and railroads is largely responsible for their spread to the broken and uncultivated lands. It is 'too true, however, that some farmers are careless and thoughtless enough not only of their own, but their neighbors' interests, to sow the screenings containing all the rubbish of the grass and clover seeds they may grow on any fallow ground they may happen to have, expecting to get good results from the good seed which may be in it, but often reaping a harvest of weed life, that years of patient and persistent effort on the part of themselves or others, is unable to overcome. It also becomes a menace to adjoining lands, where broken lands obtain, are overrun with one or more forms of noxious weed life. Many examples of this might be instanced if space permitted.

In most instances where noxious weeds have spread in these ways, someone might have prevented it by a little knowledge and persistent effort. The highways over which hay and grain are carried is a continual source of danger from weed infestation. The railroads it may be said to their credit are carrying out the law in destroy-



The Aftermath of a Labor Shortage.

The illustration represents what should have been a profitable crop of turnips. Owing to neglect the weeds gained the ascendancy. Fields left in this way are a menace not only to their owners but are a source of perennial danger to their neighbors. Those farmers who advocate special legislation to control weeds have strong ground for the stand they take in instances of this kind. Photo by our special representative.

appear, that if there is any weed, to which the law of the land should apply, more than it does at present it is this one, for none are more difficult to eradicate, excepting perhaps Field Bindweed and Bladder Campion, or more easily distributed both by wind and through the commerce in seeds.

BLADDER CAMPION

Another weed which is widening its constituency every year and quite rapidly too, is the Bladder Campion, also called by a variety of names, such as rattle box, bell weed, and white cockle, etc. It is a very deeply rooted perennial, and is found in nearly every section from Lindsay to the town of Perth in quantity, while its presence is also noted in nearly every part of the Province. Its