

# Better Farming Club

## PRIZE WINNERS EXPERIENCES

The winners at The Guide Seed Fair are among the best farmers in Western Canada. Their success was not due to chance. It was the result of careful work in cultivation and selection. The methods of some of the winners are published herewith and other letters will follow in succeeding issues. Of those whose letters appear below, Mr. Smith won the first prize of \$100 on his wheat, which scored 384½ points out of a total of 400 allowed for grain and sheaf. Mr. Clark had the distinction of winning the most money of any competitor, taking away \$115, which included the second prize on wheat and first each on oats and barley. Mr. Persson won second prize on barley and the fourth on oats.

## GROWING WINNING EXHIBITS

In the fall of 1915, I started to prepare my plots by spreading a light coat of manure over them. The next step was double discing the stubble. I like to do this in the fall, but on this occasion it was not done until the next spring, the disc being followed by a packer. I find that on our heavy land if the discing is not packed, and there is a wet summer, there is sometimes trouble in getting the plow to clean. By packing, however, this is avoided. When the land is treated like this most of the weeds and volunteer grain will have germinated by the beginning of June. The land was plowed about the third week in June, about six inches deep, and harrowed immediately afterwards. I gave it three more strokes of the harrows in July at intervals of about 10 days. After this I gave no further cultivation as I find that any weeds that come after July are killed by frost before they ripen, and much cultivation of the surface soil is liable to make it too fine, and cause drifting.

Last summer, we had continual snow and rain for the first three weeks of April, which completely saturated the ground. I commenced work on the land the last day of April by harrowing the plots. I find that the time spent in harrowing is more than made up by quicker germination.

The wheat plot of two-thirds of an acre was seeded on May 1, at the rate of 60 lbs. of seed to the acre, the seed being treated with formalin, 1 lb. to 40 gallons of water, by dipping the bags of grain in the solution. I do not believe in heavy seeding, as the lighter seeding gives a larger head, and in most cases yields more. I always aim in seeding to put the seed in deep enough so that it is into the moist part of the seed bed, usually about two-and-a-half inches. If there is any doubt I would sooner put it a little deeper. This year the soil was so wet that I did not put it down more than two inches. May was ushered in by a hot south wind, which lasted for a week and sapped all the moisture from the surface soil with the result that all wheat in this district was more or less patchy. I did not pack after the seeder although I have always done this, other years, but the soil was already so compacted by rains that I followed the seeder with the harrows.

The quarter acre plots of oats and barley received the same treatment up to seeding, which was done on the 12th and 23rd of May respectively, but as the soil was now showing the effects of the hot weather, I seeded them about three-and-a-half inches deep, and followed the seeder with the packer and harrows.

## A Scanty Rainfall

The oats were sown at the rate of 80 lbs. to the acre, and the barley 96

lbs. Both were treated with formalin like the wheat. These came up fairly even but on May 29 a heavy frost cut the wheat and oats right to the ground. The first rain fell on June 19th, when we had about half an inch. There was a light rain of about a quarter of an inch two weeks later, but this very soon evaporated and there was no more rainfall up to harvest. By the middle of July the plants had commenced to burn up and were very stunted, although they had fairly good heads.

I cut the wheat plot on August 23, and the oats and barley on August 28. I could have cut them a few days earlier but I always like the plots to be well matured. Several times after heading, I went through the plots to pick out impurities, and the day before cutting I picked the material for my exhibition sheaves. After cutting, the sheaves were put in stacks of twelve sheaves each and capped.

The threshed grain exhibits were prepared in the same way I make my selections for the next year's seed plots. I have discontinued selecting heads in the field as I find that by selecting from the sheaf more attention can be paid

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to type, which in my opinion is most important.

When a variety is pure, stooling capacity is more a question of local environment than heredity, and has no effect on future generations. I always select heads that are well filled, true to type, free from disease, and well matured. I generally make my selections in the evenings after supper. By doing so no time is lost in the daytime when other work may be done. I would not, however, recommend this method to a married man unless he had a very amiable wife, or else a room where he could rule supreme, as otherwise the resulting litter might cause domestic troubles. Being one of those unfortunate bachelors myself, I am allowed (by myself) to make all the litter I like in the house, and when I am selecting grain, I sure do it.

For wheat and barley I place a sheaf butt first in a bag, and as the best heads are generally in the top of the sheaf,

it is very easy to make selections. After taking the best heads from the sheaf, I leave the rest in the bag and thresh it with a stick. A pick handle is good for this. The selected heads I tie in small bundles and thresh in a clean bag.

Oats have to be done differently as the heads tangle together so that they cannot be drawn out from a sheaf, so I cut the sheaf open and taking a small handful at a time, spread them on a table and divide into two lots, selected and rejected, threshing them the same as the other grains. I always select about twice as much as I want, and then clean several times through a fanning mill, taking care that the mill is perfectly clean first.

Owing to the drought, the yields this year were very low. From the barley I obtained five bushels, of the oats (which were almost destroyed by stray cattle) I only threshed one and a quarter bushels, but I think they would have

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