

THE ADORNMENT OF RURAL HOMES.

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"One feature of farm life that is still shamefully neglected in many cases is the condition of home surroundings. Partly is this due to the lack of information, partly to uncultivated taste, and partly to inertia. We desire to furnish the information, cultivate the taste, and stimulate the efforts of our readers by publishing a few terse, practical articles on the adornment of rural homes."

With the foregoing remarks, the editor prefaces his request for a series of short articles on the above subject. In responding to the request, we fully appreciate the need for more attention to this matter, knowing the great difference it would make in the joy and comfort of country life if more thought and care were given to it.

It was quite natural that in a new country, such as even the oldest part of ours was not long ago, the settler's first efforts should be to put up buildings, clearing his fields, and subduing the surrounding forest. These humble dwellings, as they stood out in the clearing, sheltered and protected by the natural forest, were indeed homes to be proud of. They spoke volumes for the industry and thrift of the sturdy pioneers, but as time has gone on the trees have disappeared, and the country has become nearly all clearing. In most cases the pioneer buildings have been succeeded by more pretentious ones, but little or nothing has been done in the way of replacing the trees and shrubs removed. As a consequence, many of these places are now bleak, treeless, cheerless abodes, hardly worthy of the name of home. Is it to be wondered at that the boys find no inducement to remain on such farms? I verily believe that one very important factor in making farm life attractive, both for young and old, is the improvement of home surroundings. We do not need to inquire about the intelligence and thrift of the occupants of these neglected places, for the appearance and surroundings of a home are usually a fairly good index to the intelligence and progressiveness of those who live in it. It is pleasing to note that among progressive Canadians, both in the country and town, there has been a manifest desire of late years to give more attention to home improvement.

When property owners appreciate the fact that the small outlay for trees, shrubs and vines, and the comparatively little labor required to put and keep a place in an attractive condition, adds from fifty to one hundred per cent. to the value of the property, then they begin to realize that improvement of this kind pays, even from a dollar-and-cents standpoint. For the sake of the family, for the sake of comfort and convenience, as well as from a financial standpoint, home improvement is a paying investment.

One of the first things to be remembered in improving an old place, or laying out a new one, is that the adornment of the place should not be confined to the little block of land hemmed in by four fences in front of the house, and known as "the front yard." The improvement should be planned on a larger scale, and should include not only the front yard, but back yard and the entire farm. Probably one of the greatest hindrances to such improvement has been the idea that the front yard should be fenced off from the rest of the place, and that the little bit of ground devoted to lawn must all be cut with scythe or lawn mower. In improving the surroundings of a home, usually the first thing to be done is to remove all unnecessary fences—and it is surprising how few of them are really necessary—cut out dead or crowding trees, and clean out untidy corners. The grounds should then be laid out on a scale large enough to admit of the use of the

ordinary farm mower in keeping the grass cut, not only in the front and back yard, but all around the buildings and up and down the drive and roadsides. In most cases it may be found necessary to plow up and properly grade the grounds about the buildings and along the roadside. It is far more satisfactory to have this done properly than to attempt to keep in condition grounds which are not well graded. The grounds should slope away gently from the buildings to insure good drainage. It is not necessary nor desirable to bring the land all to a uniform level. If the grounds are somewhat rolling, the general effect is more pleasing than if they are on a dead level. All little inequalities of surface, however, should be levelled off, so that the mower can be used conveniently. In grading,

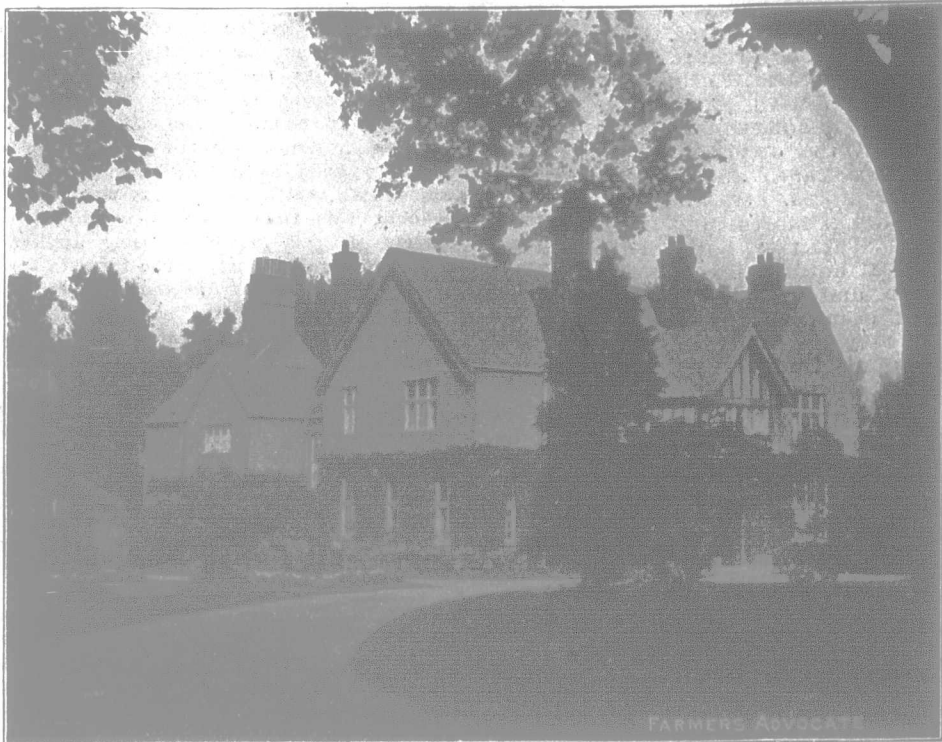
Care should be taken in sowing to get an even distribution of the seed, and it should be done on a still day, when the wind will not blow away the lighter seeds. After seeding, the ground should be gone over lightly with a rake to cover the seed, and, if the soil is dry, it is best to thoroughly roll it. This insures quick germination of the seed and leaves a smooth surface. It is better to make use of a light roller by hand, rather than use horses, which are likely to leave deep tracks in the mellow soil. The first mowing had also better be done by hand with the scythe, until the sod gets tough enough that it will not be cut up by the wheels of the mower; but after two or three months, when the sod has become firm, the mower may be used freely. Any good farm mower, with the cutter bar set as low

as possible, and the knives kept sharp, may be used to keep the lawn in excellent condition. If the cutting can be done frequently enough to avoid necessity for raking off any cut grass, so much the better; but if time cannot be spared to do this often, it should be mowed at least once a month during the growing season, and the grass raked off. Where one wishes to have a croquet lawn or tennis court, a small portion of the lawn may be closely clipped for this purpose by means of a hand mower.

One of the important items in laying out the grounds about the home is the proper location of the drive and walks. The main drive should enter at the side of the grounds, and not cut across the open lawn. It should curve around towards the building as though it were the easiest natural means of approach, or it may run fairly direct from the road to the barns, and curve in towards the dwelling in passing. It is needless to say that the drive should be properly graded, that all surface water may run off readily; and, if good gravel is available, it should be gravelled, so that it will dry off quickly. It is well to avoid having too many walks around the buildings. Those necessary usually locate themselves through the daily travel, and wherever walks are necessary, they should be made dry and clean, to avoid carrying dirt into the house.

In our next we shall treat of the selection and planting of trees, shrubs and vines about the home.

A man in Northumberland Co., Pa., named C. K. Sober, has a large chestnut grove, where he had grafted about 400 acres of wild-chestnut land to the cultivated Paragon chestnut. The grafted sprouts came into bearing very young, and are now producing heavily, the sales last year returning \$5,000.00.



An English Country Home.

Note the winding drives; the vines; the lawn, and the natural arrangement of the trees.

where any deep cutting has to be made, good surface soil should again be put on top to insure a good growth of grass or trees and shrubs, if these are planted upon it.

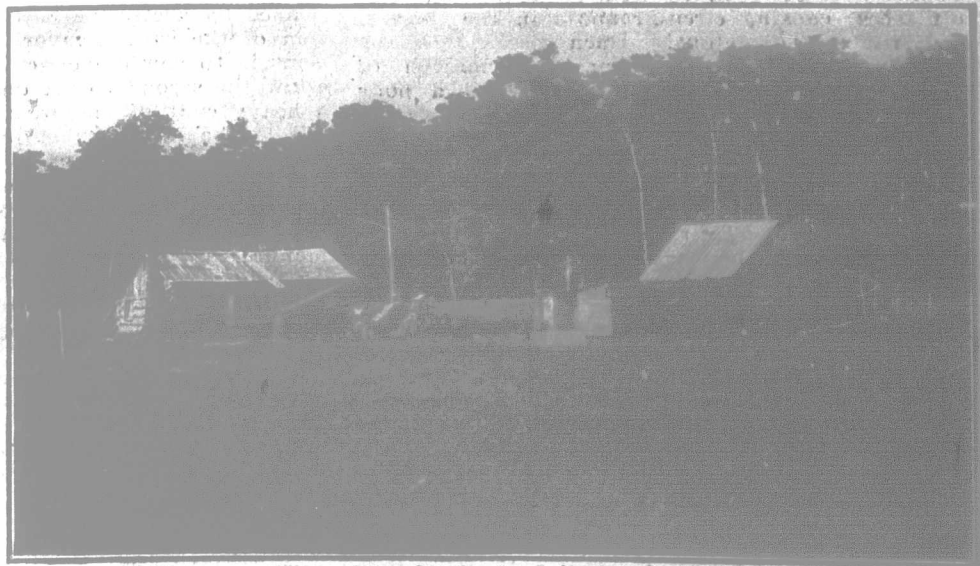
After the ground has been well worked up by plowing and cultivating, the levelling may be done by means of a drag or float which will leave a smooth surface. As a final preparation for seeding, however, nothing can be used which will leave the ground in better condition than the garden rake. This may seem like a small tool to attempt to go over an acre or two of lawn, but it should be remembered that this work is being done for all time to come, and it pays to do it well.

The best mixture with which to seed down the lawn is made of equal parts, by weight, of Kentucky blue grass, red-top and white Dutch clover. To insure getting good clean seed, these may be bought separately and mixed at home. This mixture should be sown at the rate of about two measured bushels per acre. In seeding down for a lawn, we want the grass to grow as quickly as possible; therefore much heavier seeding is required than when seeding for hay, where each plant has more or less room for development.



Room for Improvement.

Note the variety and dilapidation of fences; fence-corners full of weeds and rubbish; dead and diseased trees ready for brush pile.



A Picture of Neatness on an Algoma Pioneer's Farm.

Note the absence of unnecessary fences; farm mower used close up to buildings; hardwood bush for shelter; vines and flowers near doorway.