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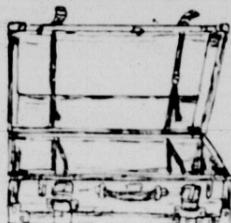
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## ALFALFA QUESTIONS

A reader at Glensouris writes:—In recent numbers of The Guide there have been a number of articles dealing with the importance to the farmers of the West of going in more for the cultivation of alfalfa with a view to the improvement of the condition of the soil. These articles were able, important and instructive as far as they went. There is one point, however, which has been overlooked up to the present, namely, the possibility of getting home-grown seed and how to get it. I suppose there is no doubt that the seed of alfalfa fertilizes in this country. We are told that two or three crops may be cut in one season. Now, what I desire to know is, which of these cuttings would be the seed bearing crop and how should it be treated to get the best results in the matter of quality and quantity of seed? Does the threshing of alfalfa require special machinery to prepare the seed for use? What quantity of seed should be sown to the acre, and how best to sow, with or without a nursing crop? The importance of introducing bacteria into the soil with the seed admits of no question, as alfalfa is, I suppose, as good as any other weed without bacteria while it is all important to the soil with it. I have been informed that alfalfa will not grow without bacteria. This I am disposed to doubt, as I have some that was sown some ten years ago—a very small quantity of seed on a large quantity of ground—and it is there still, if anything somewhat more plentiful than when first sown and, too, the plants show a healthy and vigorous growth. Another question I should like to ask is, when do the nodules appear on the roots and when would they be found on them. I have an acre of alfalfa sown and treated with Professor Bottomly's pure culture (Bactarine), and tho the preparation worked according to direction satisfactorily, I have not been able to find any of the nodules on the roots, tho this is the third year since planting and there has always been a healthy, and, this season, a vigorous growth. I am writing this with a view to call attention to the necessity of getting home grown seed if alfalfa is to be generally introduced into the country and to become a success. As but few of the farmers will care to lay out the price of a farm on the necessary seed, as it is at the present time being sold.

By giving this a place in The Guide you will oblige the writer, as well as calling general attention to a question of supreme importance to the welfare of this country.

### Answers

In answer to this correspondent it may be said that in his locality only one cutting is general each year, so that if the alfalfa is to be grown for seed only it will be allowed to fully mature seed before it is cut at all.

Treatment in harvesting is similar to that which is followed in handling any grass seed. Cut when mature, allow to thoroughly dry and then, if only a small area is being harvested, store in the barn so that it may be threshed at leisure.

Large quantities of alfalfa would be threshed by a machine similar to a clover huller, but in this country, where only a small amount will be raised, hand threshing by means of a flail will be found to be the best and cheapest method to adopt.

Quantity of seed sown to the acre varies from 11 to 18 pounds, depending upon the visibility of the seed. If alfalfa is to be grown for seed purposes it is generally sown in rows so that it can be cultivated, and this method will only require from 3 to 6 pounds of seed per acre.

Sow without a nurse crop. Alfalfa will grow in some soils without inoculation, due probably to the fact that the legume bacteria which alfalfa requires for its best development are already in the soil, but since there is no way of determining their presence other than by the resulting crop, it is best in every case to inoculate all the seed.

It is difficult to say just exactly when the nodules appear on the roots, but they will undoubtedly be found on good healthy plants if these are removed very carefully from the ground, having some of the surrounding soil attached.

Continued on Page 22

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