

THE FARM

COUCH GRASS

This plant has many aliases as a pickpocket, which testifies to its well known but not generally appreciated characteristics. It is variously known as Twitch-grass, Quack-grass, Quick-grass, and by half a dozen other names.

While this weed has some very excellent qualities as a pasture plant, and is even said to surpass timothy in nutritive value, its habit of taking and keeping possession of the soil, renders it extremely objectionable in cultivated fields and gardens, and its destruction is one of the most serious problems the farmer has to face.

It is a creeping perennial which grows from one to three feet high; having a pointed root-stock which runs through the soil for long distances at a depth of three or four inches, and which possesses enormous vitality. From these it throws up shoots at intervals to form new plants. Careless cultivation and neglect of the headlands is largely responsible for the strong hold it is able to maintain on cultivated lands.

It flowers in June and July, producing about four hundred seeds, which ripen in July and August.

It flourishes best in humus or loamy soils, from which it is particularly difficult to eradicate.

To get rid of it, as soon as the crop is harvested, plow the field lightly, then harrow with an ordinary harrow and if necessary follow with the spring tooth cultivator. This shakes the roots free from the soil and makes it possible to gather them up with a horse rake. Do this and burn as soon as they have dried sufficiently. Repeat this process two or three times. If the weather at the time should be dry and hot your chances of success will be so much the greater. Late in the fall rip up the land into drills and allow it to stand over winter. The frost will in all probability render material assistance in the eradication. The following spring plow about the end of May, cultivate well and put in some hoe crop or summer fallow, sowing buckwheat to be plowed in. A carefully cultivated crop of rape is recommended as being particularly effective in destroying this pest.

A farmer of New York state, much troubled with this weed, gives his experience in destroying it as follows:

"About eight years ago I had a piece of witch grass sod which I do not think could possibly have been any worse. I plowed it fairly early and harrowed it thoroughly at intervals until the middle of June, when I marked it so inches apart each way, put a tablespoonful of high-grade fertilizer in each hill, went through with the marker again to mix the fertilizer with the soil, and set large-sized plants of Succession cabbage. I started the cultivator the next day with a new set of sharp teeth, and kept it

going. When the cabbage roots began to reach out I put a handful of fertilizer around each plant; cultivated (shallower and gradually narrower) as long as I could get through, which was not long, and the result was I 'done up' the witch grass in one season, and raised a profitable crop at the same time as the cabbages were immense. At the time the plants were set the grass showed up quite green in spite of my harrowing, and perhaps would have beaten me out but for the cabbages. Since that year there has never been a vestige of witch grass in the field."



COUCH GRASS

FEEDING VALUE OF CORN STOVER

The opinions of farmers as to the feeding value of corn stover have differed widely. Some claim that it has but little nutritive value, while others consider it to have about half the feeding value of hay. Its true value depends to a great extent upon its mechanical condition, the quantity fed daily, and its proper combination with other feeding stuffs.

When stover is fed whole the average animal eats the leaves, husks and tops and refuses the stalks. To show the increased consumption caused by cutting corn stover, three feeding experiments were conducted with milch cows. The cows were fed a grain ration, and in addition all they would eat of cut or uncut stover. The corn was cut into inch lengths in a feed cutter which also shredded the coarse stalks. The first two experiments were conducted with Pride of the North stover, a medium dent variety and the last with Stowell Evergreen, planted thickly. It was found that cutting saved thirty-six per cent. of the fodder in the first, thirty-one in the second, and nine per cent. in the third experiment. It is probably a conservative statement that one-third of the stover is lost when fed whole.

Machines are in use which husk

the corn and shred the stover at the same time, and they give very satisfactory results. Any machine that will thoroughly shred the fodder is preferable to one that simply cuts it. Fodder that is shredded immediately on being drawn from the field is often so moist as to mould when thrown in large piles, and proves worthless for feeding. On the other hand if the fodder is stored for a few months previous to shredding, the danger is largely if not entirely avoided. This involves considerable extra expense, however, which sometimes renders it of somewhat doubtful economy. The fact remains that stover cannot be shredded in any large quantity when moist without great danger of its rapidly becoming unfit for feeding. Farmers having power cutters of their own can shred at one time sufficient for a week's use without danger of its spoiling.

Corn stover should not be the only feed given the animals if profitable returns are to be expected from its use. After the corn plant has well ripened it is by no means as profitable as hay, and it is a heat producer rather than a flesh former, and hence of itself an improperly balanced ration. One would expect a small milk yield if stover was the exclusive food of milch cows, for reasonable quantities of digestible protein must be supplied when a large milk flow is desired. When growing animals are wintered on corn stover only they will do very little more than maintain their weight, for growing stock also needs digestible protein to produce bone and muscle.

Many experiments have been made with milch cows, comparing cut corn stover as an exclusive coarse feed with an equal quantity of good hay, the grain rations being the same in both cases, and the entire ration being properly balanced. The corn stover rations have produced from three-fourths as much to approximately the same quantity of milk daily as the hay rations, the yield being influenced somewhat by the length of the feeding period, and the quality of the stover. While such a method of feeding is decidedly superior to feeding the stover exclusively, it can undoubtedly be improved upon. When milch cows are fed on stover as the only coarse food, they eat it well for a short time, but soon begin to tire of it, and then will eat no more than two-thirds as much stover as hay. In the first place the stover lacks the agreeable odor and flavour of hay, and secondly the use of large quantities of cut stover tends to make the animals' mouths sore, causing them to eat less than otherwise. This difficulty is far less when the stover is shredded. These two conditions operate to prevent animals fed on stover as the only coarse fodder from giving as full and as large milk yields for long periods as are obtained from a good quantity of hay. The same conditions are noticeable in the case of growing steers when fed on grain and corn