

The Lake Winnipeg rice fields are found in the vicinity of Bad Throat River, Hole River, and Blood Vein River and they also extend as far north as Poplar River in the interior, especially on the head waters of Berens River. Wild rice is not found at all on the west side of Lake Winnipeg. In some of the above localities there are immense quantities of it, notably is this the case at Weeluskawasipi. These latter are the fields that can be most easily worked as they are not far from the main lake (Lake Winnipeg). The mouths of the above mentioned rivers and many small streams betray the existence of the rice in the interior for the seed has drifted down and sown itself at their mouths, which may be seen at Sand River, Bad Throat, Hole River and Askandago Sippi. It is not found on Lake Winnipeg itself in any quantity except in a very few secluded bays.

I have never met with any case of the Indians planting the rice for themselves and it is not to be expected that they should do so when nature has been so very bountiful in her supplies, and as it is a very hardy plant nothing in the ordinary run of life would be capable of destroying a rice field, and its position in the water and porous aqueous nature renders it safe from fire. That it requires but little care for its cultivation is evident because careless handling of the rice by the Indians when unloading their canoes at the rice gathering camps has sown it all around these spots. Two years ago I sent into the settlements two bushels of seed for the experiment of planting it so as to establish a wild duck feeding ground for hunting purposes. This was done on Nettley Creek close to Selkirk, and though tried under most unfavorable circumstances the experiment was a fair success as far as the propagation of the rice was concerned.

The most necessary point to obtain success in the cultivation of wild rice is a good and fairly steady depth of water, and if possible, what is known as musky water. Waters containing a large percentage of lime and subject to sudden floods or frequent changes of depth do not appear suitable, although there are some fine, though small, rice fields which yield good crops, existing close to this place under these conditions. It is certainly a water plant, for it is always found growing in the water, and not merely in marshy ground, in fact I never saw it growing out of the water. I always find it growing in the water from two to seven feet deep, and usually in still water, but never in stagnant water. A gentle stream or a small lake with a river running through it always has the most abundant crops. Soft muddy bottom is what it loves best, especially if there is a large percentage of muskeg loam in its composition. But some places it grows in sandy gravel bottoms. The root of this plant is not very large, the largest feeders being not more than 10 inches, but the stem also trails along the ground for many feet, at every joint throws out an abundance of auxiliary feeders. In suitable positions it grows so thickly that it is impossible to force a canoe through it, the stems and feeders being so densely packed at the water's surface that it will bear up a man running quickly over it. Wild rice grows very quickly, showing itself above the water about the end of June and ripens by the first or second week in September, by which time it will stand four, five or even six feet above the water. It is this rapid growth, especially in otherwise favorable seasons, which now and again renders the crop almost a complete failure, for if there should perchance occur, as was the case last summer, a severe wind storm in the latter end of August, the rice fields are flattened into the water, making it impossible to gather it with the crude implements the Indians have at their command.

Ducks and geese frequent these wild rice fields in thousands and grow exceedingly fat, especially the common wild duck or mallard, and the green-winged teal. Mice and squirrels are the only animals that to my knowledge use the grain for food, though muskrats eat it when it shoots above the water in June. Innumerable small birds frequent the fields and large flocks of starlings and yellow cardinal birds. When it is gathered and drying the Indian dogs are very greedy for it, and sometimes a bear will come upon an Indian's cache and devour the whole of it. The reindeer and moose do not eat it.

I have no doubt but that under proper management wild rice could be successfully cultivated in swampy districts, but it would require, as you suggest, sufficient