

The Growing of Clover and Alfalfa

The question to which readers were invited this week to contribute their experiences was couched in the following terms: What method of preparing the land, seeding and after care, have you used with best success in the growing of red clover and alsike, or in the growing of alfalfa. From the nature of the replies received one would judge there is little information extant as to the successful growing of these clovers in Western Canada. Here and there, all over the country are farmers who have experimented with one kind of clover or another, but too frequently it happened that these experiments, from some cause, did not indicate a favorable condition of soil or climate for the growing of these crops. So, as a general rule, experimenters, after one test or at most two, gave up the attempt to grow clovers. But in a few cases something better than failure crowned the efforts of experimenters, with the result that in each of the three provinces we find farmers farming in districts in no wise favored, growing the three clovers satisfactorily. It was to gather the experience of such men that we framed the query first propounded to our readers a month ago. From the letters received in answer we have selected a few, the writers of which explain the means they adopted to attain the success they have attained in the growing of clovers and alfalfa. The prizes have been awarded to Philip Leech, Saskatchewan and C. J. Disney, Manitoba.

A Successful Alfalfa Grower's Experience

EDITOR FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

A few years ago I came to the conclusion that the time would come, when the farmers throughout this Western country would require to grow forage plants as well as grain. Having read a lot about alfalfa and the wonderful feeding value of it, and the success of a few Western people in growing it, I determined to try some on my own farm. I believe that the time will come when every farmer in Western Canada will be growing alfalfa. Now as to the way I grew it:

In the first place, if you intend to try to grow alfalfa, the first thing you must do is to put a fence around the field you sow it in, as alfalfa will not live if it is pastured while in its tender stages, and should you have any stock running loose, every head you have got, will be on that alfalfa patch once they have got used to eating it. I will give you my methods of what I consider to be the best way to prepare land for alfalfa. Take a piece of stubble land that has been a few years cropped. During the winter months give it a good heavy coating of manure, then after seeding the following spring give it a harrowing and should there be a large amount of straw you might get it out of your way by burning it; I do not mean to say you should burn the whole lot over as you would a field of stubble. Summer fallow that piece of land and work it thoroughly as you would do for wheat. Most people would object to this but I say if land is worth summer fallowing for wheat, it surely is worth it for alfalfa. In the following spring plow that same land again. Most people again would object to this, but my reasons are that when you sow a field of alfalfa it is there to stay if you will look after it, for a number of years, and land that will not be plowed for a number of years will be inclined to get grassy. By plowing it in the spring you will stop the growth of grass for a year or so anyway. Now harrow it and pack it firmly and as soon as the rain comes, sow from fifteen to eighteen pounds of seed per acre.

The next thing you must do you must get soil from an alfalfa field to inoculate the ground, a sackful will do an acre, but more would be better, and just scatter it all over the land and harrow it. If you could not get the soil at the time you sowed the seed; it would do afterwards, but the land must have it. Probably a great many will not know what the soil is for. It contains bacteria that are in the old alfalfa field and if you will examine roots of the same you will find on those roots what is called nodules, small little lumps a little larger than a pin head. I have often examined the roots of my alfalfa and found hundreds of them and it has done well. I have spoken to several people that have tried to grow it, and, in all cases, those I have spoken to that have not succeeded in growing it did not go to the trouble to get soil to inoculate their land.

Should the seed be sown by the middle of May you will cut a pretty good crop by the middle of August, but if the land was dirty with foul weeds you would require to keep it clipped off and just leave what you clipped off on the ground. After the middle of August the alfalfa will make considerable growth but just let it alone and I say again, keep your cattle off it. If they get on it and eat it off right to the ground it will be killed. If you get a hardy alfalfa seed you will cut two good crops a year and it will be there to stay for quite a number of years.

As soon as the alfalfa begins to get grassy take the disc and disc it, but do not run the disc very deep. Disc it every time after it is cut to keep the grass down.

It is three years ago since I sowed my alfalfa. The first two years I cut very heavy crops. Last spring I put a pig fence around it and used it as a pig and calf pasture. They did very well on it. Alfalfa, I believe, is the best forage plant we can grow. My reasons are these: Last year was pretty dry here in July and very hot. The native grasses and cultivated grasses all dried up, but our alfalfa was as green right to freeze-up and the dry weather did not seem to hurt it as the roots of it are away down into the ground and I would hate to have to dig to find the bottom of them.

Sask.

P. L.

Successful Method of Growing Red Clover and Alsike

EDITOR FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

I commenced growing alsike in the year 1893, on a small piece of land by way of experiment. It was oat stubble land. I plowed it in the spring, harrowed once and sowed with barley. Afterwards I sowed alsike by hand, four pounds to the acre, after which I harrowed and rolled. This proved successful as the land was low. I cut four good crops in successive years. After this I top-dressed the field with barn-yard manure, and took two more crops off it, which were even better than the first crops.

During the winter of 1902-1903 I drew barn-yard manure and distributed it evenly over a piece of wheat stubble. Early in the spring I disced and harrowed it, and left it till the end of May to give the weeds a chance to grow. I then plowed, drag-harrowed and rolled the land. Then I sowed a mixture of two pounds of alsike and four pounds of common red clover to the acre, going over it with light harrows afterwards. When the weeds were six or eight inches high I mowed them off, (setting the mower high enough to miss the young clover), and left them lying on the ground to wilt. This method proved very successful. I cut the first crop in 1904 getting over two tons per acre, and the crops of 1905 and 1906 were equally good. In the fall of 1906, I top-dressed the land with a light coat of well rotted barn-yard manure, evenly distributed. In the following spring I went over it with a drag-harrow several times. This treatment seemed to benefit the land quite a lot as the crops of 1907 and 1908 were even better than the former ones. Care should be taken to prevent stock from running on the land in the spring when it is wet.

The first method I find to be successful on low land, but I would not advise it on high land as the nurse crop takes all the moisture from the young plants. Judging from my personal experience, the latter is the method I would recommend to farmers wishing to grow clover or alsike.

Man.

C. J. DISNEY.

Seeding to Alfalfa

EDITOR FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

In the seeding of any small seed as grass, clover or garden seed, the most important factor is the weather following the sowing. If the seed sprouts and the drouth kills it, the crop is gone. Taking that chance, however, must be always necessary. S. A. Bedford tells me, and I find it correct in this district: "That alfalfa needs no inoculation in Manitoba, the soil having the proper bacteria from the other legumes, the wild vetch, and the buffalo bean." The stated quantity of seed is 20 pounds per acre. I took a teaspoonful of seed, halved, quartered and divided until I could count; then multiplied to find the number of square feet in an acre, after which I sowed five pounds or less to the acre. On ninety acres, I believe half died or failed to get through the summer, thirty or forty acres blew out together with the wheat sown with it as a nurse crop, but probably half is a good catch. It looks thin as alfalfa never stools with a nurse crop but the rows are six inches apart and the plants from two to six inches apart in the rows. When these plants have stooped, as they do up to twenty or even one hundred stalks to the root, I will have a stand good enough for me. I shall reseed with varying quantities the blown out part, not disturbing more than necessary the plants still easily found there. The seed is as easy to get in the ground as brome, and anybody can get that to grow.

The ground should be firm. Mine had been harrowed and crossed until it was firm, the seeder put at an inch to an inch and a half deep. I do not advise plowing the land for alfalfa seeding. I shall sow on stubble well disced and harrowed, and without a nurse crop this coming year, mowing about every month. This is ideal treatment. The objection to a nurse crop is in the ripening period for the grain. The leaves drop off the little alfalfa plants, and they push up little green leaves at the root making still another effort for life. This continued last summer for about a month. I thought the whole stand did die a few times but when I got the grain off the whole ground was as green as an onion bed in a week.

I shall sow alfalfa in the future with some early crop like barley or the Orloff oats, which is, if anything earlier than barley, as I am sure I can get the grain off before it would damage the alfalfa. If I found a drouth got me I would mow the grain for hay. The day of alfalfa is here. It is easy to grow. I mowed it for hay on June 17th. Again it was ready

on July 25. All farm stock eat it in preference to other food. It sprouts in the spring as early as brome. Geo. Leigh, of Aurora, Ill., the Hereford breeder and importer, laid over a day to see my alfalfa last fall. He thinks we have an alfalfa country all right. He says: "If you can grow alfalfa you never need manure. You'll have wheat 50 and 60 bushels to the acre after alfalfa." I am spending from \$75 to \$100 per year for seed and will continue till I go broke or get rich.

Man.

A. A. TITUS.

Successful Experiments with Alfalfa

EDITOR FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

I will describe as well as I can my experience in alfalfa growing. It has been rather limited being confined to half an acre of alfalfa. I sowed the seed on land that had previously been in potatoes, manuring the soil thoroughly in the fall with well rotted manure, plowed the plot in the spring and worked it down firm and fine. I sowed the seed with an ordinary double disc drill. I would say here that I would advise anyone sowing in this way to mix dry sand with the seed to prevent sowing too thickly. I did not use any nurse crop, nor did I treat the seed with nitro culture, or inoculate the soil. The alfalfa came up and was a good even stand.

During the first summer I clipped the plot off twice with a mower, to prevent the weeds from seeding. It was left without mulch or protection of any kind and came through the winter without killing in the least.

Last summer I mowed the plot twice, first about the middle of July and next about the 24th of August. The first crop, when cut, measured over two feet in height, the second about twenty inches. I had some difficulty in curing as most of the leaves dropped off in the handling. That however has been my experience with alfalfa up to the present. I am satisfied it can be grown in this part of Saskatchewan, that is in the Moosomin district.

Sask.

A. P. CRISP.

Seeding Down for Meadow

EDITOR FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

Since the articles which have appeared in the FARMER'S ADVOCATE lately have not been quite satisfactory I give you my way of seeding down. It suits me and may be of benefit to others.

Preparation should begin in the fall or sooner, and I would wait a year before seeding in order to put the soil in proper shape. Plow in the fall early and deep, level and pack crossways of the plowing then harrow also across. For levelling and packing I use a frame seven feet by fifteen feet made of three seven-inch poles fifteen feet long and three feet apart and five cross pieces seven feet long with a seat near the front and drawn by four horses. Harrow or disk in the spring, and sow spring wheat or barley a little thin and as early as possible, and the grass seed by an attachment behind the drill or by any other way while the soil is fresh. Then harrow with a light harrow. All grass seed needs covering and will germinate at quite a depth in our light humus soil.

If the soil is solid and moist, and it will be with this preparation, eight pounds of good timothy seed per acre is quite enough. Much more seed will produce finer stalks and fewer tons. Timothy suits best for the middle of Alberta. Timothy and brome is better for pasture. Manure is very important for successful work, and can be applied during the winter a year before seeding down, or in the fall just before plowing, or a year after seeding and brushed in.

Alta.

W. J. BAYCROFT.

Folly in High Places

EDITOR FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

This is just to let you know that I am looking for an editorial in the FARMER'S ADVOCATE in reply to all the foolishness appearing in the press relative to navy building.

Hasn't Germany as much moral right to a great navy as has Britain? Hasn't she as much right to possess a navy to "guard her shores" as Britain has to possess one to "menace" them. This sentence presents the thing from the German viewpoint. The converse is identically the Briton's viewpoint. Which is right? Obviously: neither!

Some fools in high places have even suggested that Britain present an ultimatum to Germany to cease building. How would it be to emulate the meek and lowly Jesus, and set them an example? Britain has no more moral right to curtail Germany's operations than you have to hold a gun to my head and threaten me, upon pain of death, to refrain from selling more than one car of wheat per year.

Surely the day has come when our modern civilized barbarians shall cease to demand each other's blood in a vicarious propitiation of their own vanities.

The thing that seems to me most deeply significant is that the church is foremost in this ravenous clamour. Money wasted upon war and battleships is the worst economic waste known to man's inventive brain.

We, as individuals at least, can continue humanitarian and more wholly Christian.

R. L. SCOTT.