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OBSERVATIONS ON THE METHODS OF HANDLING CANADIAN GROWN SEED CORN

J. H. Couttsworth, Essex Co., Ont.

Some Worth While Suggestions on Handling the Corn Crop that apply particularly at this Season when the Seed for the following Year is being Selected. How to Ensure Strong Vitality

THE growing of corn for silage has become an established part of the agriculture of Eastern Canada. There is a growing demand for Canadian grown seed corn. It should, therefore, be the aim of every corn grower in these sections where the crop can be matured, to improve his methods of producing and handling the crop, in order that he may be in a position to do something towards supplying this demand. With a little judicious care in the selection of varieties in the growing and harvesting of the crop, and particularly in the care of the grain after it is harvested, just as good a quality of seed corn can be grown in Southern Ontario as can be grown anywhere on this continent.

In visiting the farms in the corn belt of Ontario, it is gratifying to note the increasing interest in the growing of seed corn. Where, a few years ago corn was being grown only for feeding purposes, now many fields are being grown for the special purpose of supplying the seed trade.

A PLANTING MISTAKE

The method of planting generally followed is all that can be desired, with the exception that in some cases too many plants are left in the hills. Frequently four and five plants are found in hills three and one-half feet apart each way, while in no case should the number exceed three, for the production of the best class of seed. Occasionally a field is planted in drills, but it is not often that this method is followed.

One of the mistakes that many farmers are making is, attempting to grow varieties that are entirely too late for our climate. These large late varieties promise a heavier yield of both grain and fodder than the earlier varieties. They are also more attractive in appearance, usually producing large, well-formed, symmetrical ears with very deep kernels; consequently they are in demand for exhibition purposes.

LATE VARIETIES UNDESIRABLE

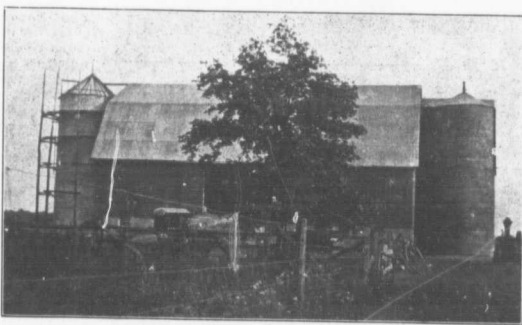
But, with our short season there is too much uncertainty in growing them, as too often they do not mature early enough to be harvested before frost. Besides, the fact that the ears are large in circumference is in some seasons objectionable, as there is greater difficulty in drying large ears than there is in drying medium-sized ones. It is safer to select those varieties that will mature under favorable conditions in from 90 to 100 days,

such as the Bailey or White Cap in Essex and Kent, while in other corn-growing centres probably the Flints are preferable. These are reasonably safe and may be depended upon to yield a good crop of hard corn almost every year.

It is the unanimous testimony of those who grow corn for silage, that it is more profitable to plant the early maturing varieties which, although they do not produce as many tons per acre, do produce a larger percentage of mature ears which make a better quality of silage than the late varieties, which are more likely to be immature when harvested.

WHERE MIXING IS UNDESIRABLE

Another undesirable feature in the production



A Big Rush at Silo Filling Time is Here a Certainty

Mr. Roger Hawkins, Oxford Co., Ont., believes in the silo because of satisfactory silo experience. One silo has proved so eminently satisfactory that another one may be here soon in course of construction. If not already filled there is still a busy time ahead for Mr. Hawkins; a profitable rush, too.

of seed corn that is readily observed in almost every part of the corn belt is the mixing of varieties. It is claimed that the pollen of the corn plant may be easily carried by wind a distance of one-quarter mile, and that no variety can be considered reasonably safe from cross-fertilization unless removed at least that distance from other varieties. Yet with the small farms in the corn districts it is difficult to find a tract of land one-quarter mile square on which there are not two or more varieties of corn being grown. This results in a lot of impurity; yellow varieties show a mixture of white and white varieties show the yellow. Some fields are very badly mixed, others very little, but fields that appear to be perfectly pure are rare.

This is one of the more serious difficulties in growing high-class seed corn. Every grower has his favorite variety, and all the growers in any

locality are not likely to agree on growing one variety only, and thereby keep that variety pure, and build up a reputation for it in that locality. The only remedy for this difficulty that suggests itself for the present at least, is that each grower keep his seed plot as isolated from other varieties as possible under the circumstances, and exercise the greatest care in the selection of seed for his seed plot, discarding every ear that shows the slightest indication of impurity, and conforming strictly to the type of the variety he is growing.

THE STORING OF SEED

It is also noticeable that the quarters in which corn is kept through the winter are not suitable for protecting the vitality and seed condition of the grain. The growing of corn for feeding purposes has been followed in Ontario for many years, the grower selecting a few bushels at husking time and giving it special attention in the way of drying it thoroughly before winter, for his seed for the following season. But the growing of corn

especially for seed is a comparatively new industry, and provision has not been made for giving considerable quantities this special care that the few bushels received before. Therefore the vitality of our corn is not as good in spring as it might be.

When corn is husked it usually contains a large percentage of moisture, and unless this moisture is expelled before the first hard freeze the germ is very seriously injured. Hence the necessity of getting seed corn husked early and storing it in narrow cribs sided with boards, not more than four inches wide, with a one-inch space between each board, instead of storing it in the wide, tight cribs that are frequently seen.

DRIVING THE CORN

The matter of getting rid of excessive moisture is one of the most important points in the production of seed corn, and it is a question worthy of consideration if it would not be advisable for the grower to provide some kind of kiln, or drying crib, for the curing of seed corn in damp, unfavorable seasons. These need not be much more expensive than the ordinary crib further than being provided with some means by which artificial heat can be applied if necessary. True, these are only needed in unfavorable seasons, such, for example, as the season of 1911, which had a damp, rainy fall, followed by a very hard freeze early in November. This did considerable damage to seed corn that was not husked early, and thoroughly dried out before.

Any close observer could not fail to notice the effect of this frost. The season was favorable for ripening the crop, but unfavorable for husking and curing it. Hence that which was husked late