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Cutting Sweet Clover for Seed.

It has been customary to handle sweet clover seed in many different ways. One will mow it with a scythe, let the clover get dry and throw all into a canvas, or into a wagon-box, and flail it out. This was our first way of getting the seed, but the method became tedious, so I began to plan for an easier and more staple method. For years we let hundreds of bushels of seed fall to the ground, all for lack of more efficient plans of harvesting. Afterwards we mowed the field and raked it, just as we had done with alsike or red clover. This method worked very well where cattle had been taken off the field, and a short crop had been allowed to produce seed. This fine, short growth could not be well handled any other way. We raked the seed crop into windrows only when damp with dew in the mornings, and gathered into small cocks, a forkful in a place, so no cock had to be torn apart at pitching-time. A canvas was spread over the rack, and was a great saver of fine seed. This canvas was emptied into the stack occasionally, and paid for itself many times over.

Where sweet clover is allowed to grow tall enough, the self-binder is the only proper method of harvesting the seed, and it is the simplest and requires the least labor of any plan that I know of. The bundles are usually ready to be stacked in two or three days after binding, and if well stacked, will turn water just like an oat stack, and can be hulled at any time after going through the sweat.

THRASHING SWEET CLOVER.

An ordinary threshing machine is best, only a set of concave teeth for the purpose of hulling clover is needed. We have employed a clover huller, which does a first-class job, but is much slower. Then again, there is no self-feed to cut the bands. The thrasher will handle these bundles and hull out the seed as fast as they can thresh wheat, but they have no recleaner, so the seed will have to be put through a good fanning mill before marketing. An ordinary red-clover sieve is just right for our variety of seed. The seed is of different sizes in different species of this clover, but the same outfit will hull all of the different varieties.

We run the binder very high, leaving just as long stubble on the ground as we can and get all the seed. This makes a shorter bundle, which is easier to handle. There will be a great plenty of straw at best. The straw when stacked keeps dry, turning all water, and if the seed crop has been gotten into the stack without too many showers, makes considerable roughage for cattle and horses—so much so that if cattle are allowed to run to these straw stacks, they will soon eat them down, and all will be under foot.

We use the straw, when not very ripe, for bedding, but it is most profitable to let the clover get quite ripe, as it means more seed. It is easy to cut the seed yield down one-half by harvesting before the seed is properly ripened, or filled fully. Three-fourths of the seed should be black and brown, and one-fourth a yellow-green. This last seed will nearly all ripen out, and if the stand is good, eight to twelve bushels can easily be hulled from one acre. There is a difference in the type of clovers as seed producers. We have a special strain that we have grown for thirteen years which is a very heavy yielder of seed, and ripens just as evenly as a field of oats, with an even top, a thing which is of vital importance to the seed grower.

Where one wishes to mature seed, the field should not be pastured unless the cattle are taken off and a mower, with the guards adjusted high, run over the field, so all will come on and ripen at once.

It is a very good plan to take the first cutting for hogs. After that a very dense, fine straw will grow up, and a satisfactory crop of seed will ripen in September. This later, finer straw, will make much better roughage and be nicer to handle. The bundles will hull very nicely from the shock, but will be found to shell quite easily in handling. The shocks should be set by twos without cap, and if for any reason the shocks

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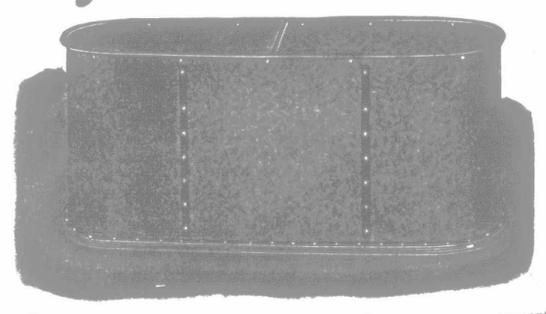
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