

THE HERALD.



AGRICULTURAL.

An Essay Read Before the Siloam Grange by W. D. Tolle.

Worthy Masters, Brothers and Sisters: As a good many of the members of this Grange are tobacco growers, I have concluded to write some three or four essays during the season on the culture of that product.

The time for burning beds varies from November to March; the time of sowing seed varies from January to March. It is claimed by some persons that November is a better time to burn plant beds than any other time, from two considerations. One is, that the ground does not require such hard burning at that season of the year; the other is, that the ashes will have a longer time to leach, and much more of the fiery nature is taken from them, in consequence of which the young plants will grow off better. This is all very feasible, and I cannot make any objection to the rule, only that in case of wet winters it may be difficult to get the ground in right order for digging up and sowing. The time most of this kind of work is done is January and February, and ought by all means to be attended to the first suitable spell of weather in January; or, at any rate some ground be burned and sown; then in February more ground may be burned and sown; but do not put off this kind of work until March if there is any possible chance to attend to it sooner. I know that it is contended by some that plants will come on as soon when the seeds are sown in March as in January, which is sometimes the case, but as a general rule, the roots of the early sowing are better than the late sowing; and, again, it is sometimes the case that we have but very little weather suitable for burning beds during the months of January or March, therefore I would advise you (taking everything into consideration) that it is best to avail yourself of the first suitable spell of weather in the year for burning plenty of ground and sowing it.

In all cases a rich spot of virgin soil should be selected (away from any opening or cleared land) in order to evade the ravages of the fly, which are much worse in or near cleared land than out in the woods. When you are ready for burning your bed the wood or brush, as the case may be, having been prepared, or a sufficient portion to commence with, rake your ground clean of all leaves and trash; then, if you use brush, commence and lay down on one side of the bed clear across, straight and nice, until you get it up some three or four feet high; then commence setting up the brush against the row, pressing it back closely until your ground is covered, then other brush and small wood can be thrown on top in sufficient quantities to weight it down and to sufficiently burn the ground. Unless your brush is dry, or you are favored with what you will find this a hard way of preparing plant ground.

A more proper and practical way is using wood. When this is the case, lay down skids in sufficient numbers and size to keep the wood off the ground; then pile on wood of any size you wish clear across your ground and start your fires regularly from one end to the other. The first pile of wood should be about four feet broad, supported behind and before with large logs, and for convenience in starting a fire, small dry wood should be plentifully used. Let this burn until the ground becomes red, and a considerable quantity of ashes has dropped from the wood, and the ground has been heated to such an extent that your good judgment would dictate to you that all roots and seeds of a wild nature that were in the ground have been killed, so that nothing would be likely to sprout during the coming season only what may be sown.

Being now ready for moving, the first thing would be to move the logs in front, which is done with hooks, taken from the laps of trees, and of size that can be easily handled; these are cut off just below the fork, one prong being used for the handle and the other cut off six or eight inches long, which is hooked over the wood. When the first log is moved to a sufficient distance, then drag the balance of the wood to it; then move the back logs and let them lie over the burnt ground; then fill in again between the logs with wood and burn as before.

If you have a still time for burning, and plenty of hands, you can build your fires across the middle of your

ground, and move both ways; but if there is any wind stirring, start your fires so that the smoke and heat will be blown from you, for burning plant beds by this process is very hard work, and every advantage that possibly could, should be taken.

There are other ways of burning plant ground that, though not so popular, are easier. One of them is to select a spot in August, and cut the surrounding trees so that the tops will fall on it and create a heavy mass, it being partially seasoned and filled with dry leaves. This is the quickest way of burning plant beds that I can give, and also the easiest. When they are burned at this season of the year, I think it best to wait until January to sow the seed. Another way of burning is to split your wood about the size of a fence rail and let it season—keep a supply on hand from one year to another. After the skids are all arranged, lay your wood on two double all over the ground, and then set fire to it. If your wood has been split twelve months, it is about all that would be necessary to give it a good start. By this process the ground can be burned with more regularity than any other, and those that have plenty of good splitting timber, I would advise to adopt this plan: it is easy and quick, and saves a good deal of valuable time and hard labor.

The ground being now burned, the next thing to be done is to take off any clumps or coarse coats that may remain. This being done, it is ready for the hoe or the plow. The former used to be the only implement used, but the plow is now used very successfully. A short, sharp gopher is preferable, when it can be obtained. Plow close both ways; then take a hoe or mattock and cut up any roots that may be in the way; then rake it off smooth and nice; after which lay off both ways about six feet wide; this can be done by dragging anything across that will make a small mark.

Mix your seed well with loose dirt, and sow regularly both ways across your bed; then take a rake, and rake lightly and regularly all over your bed, in order to cover the seed. Tramp well or roll a roller over the ground. If you tramp, commence at one edge of the bed, with the toes out. If you move off first from right to left, let your right foot drop back, so that the main part of the right foot will smooth the heel-tracks of the left. After going across the first time, and starting back, reverse the positions of your feet, and let your right foot smooth over the heel-tracks made by the same foot going over the first time, and your left foot drop back and smooth the heel-tracks made by the right foot this time going across. This is a very tiresome process, but nevertheless it has been done thousands of times. Once in a time this process was just as seen to be gone through with as the seed were sown. I would advise some other plan for settling the dirt: such as a smooth roller being rolled over the ground; or, take a plank and lay it down, and walk backward and forward a few times, and move to another place, and so on, until you have gone over all the ground. After the dirt is settled in some way, the next thing is brushing. Take smooth, flat, straight brush, and lay them on straight and nice, commencing at one side and working back. When you get the first course thick enough, commence with the second, lapping on the first about two-thirds, and so on until the bed is covered.

Tramping and covering plant beds are not much practiced nowadays and many will contend it is useless, and that plants will do just as well without it. It is true that when the season is favorable, plants will come on early and plentiful when but little pains has been taken in burning the ground, or sowing the seed; but to guard against drouth, the fly, and late freezes, these rules, if strictly adhered to, will produce good results nine times out of ten. The quantity of seed sown is about one table spoonful to the hundred square yards. The ground should be dry enough to work when burned. So far as the names of the tobacco is concerned I don't know which is the best to raise. Different kinds of tobacco bear the same name in different localities. Also, the same kinds of tobacco bear different names in different localities. The kind that we know as Apron Leaf, Big Frederic and Poor Man's Friend, are all good tobaccos to raise in this section. A heavy, tough, leafy tobacco is the kind to raise. It makes no difference what the name of it, the quality is the desirable part, hence the broader the leaf, the smaller the stem, the finer the fibers, the tougher and more weighty the plant,

the more valuable it is. I hope that this will be borne in mind, and that a better selection will be made, and all narrow leaf, coarse rough qualities will be abandoned. This is greatly to your interest, and by good selections in the kind, painstaking in the culture, you can make tobacco growing much more profitable than you heretofore have done. I have been, as I think, very explicit, so that there is no necessity of your falling into an error in attempting to perform any work that I have laid down. I have also given different ways of performing the work, so that you can choose any mode you, in your own judgment, think proper. If I am not providential hindered, I may read you another essay on the setting and culture of tobacco; and I would here say to those who have not broken their ground, that it would be well to attend to that matter as soon as possible, and keep it well pulverized until time for planting. This is necessary for all crops planted in the spring, and should be strictly adhered to.—Glasgow Times.

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