Practical Farming

Helpful Facts Gathered from Reliable Sources
Of Interest to Montana Farmers :: :: :: ::

(NOTE) If you have any idea to offer to the other readers or wish anything to appear in these columns kindly send it in.

PERENNIAL GARDEN PLANTS

There is in all probability no farm that yields any greater returns or affords more pleasure than the vegetable "garden farm." The garden is generally considered an annual affair, and to a great extent, it is, but there is no good reason why it should be entirely so. If wholesome and bountiful returns for the least expenditure of labor be sought, it might be well to give more attention to perennials, two of which are asparagus and rhubarb.

Take the first of these, asparagus, for instance. When once planted it grows many years with scarcely any care or attention, and there is no vegetable that is brought to the table more to be enjoyed than it luscious tender tips. It is all the more welcome because it is one of the earliest vegetables to be had.

Both the asparagus and the rhubarb (pie plant) may be grown very much in the same way, whether from the seed or from the roots. If started from the seed it takes about two years to get results for the table. The seed may be planted in specially prepared beds of ground where proper care and cultivation may be given, than later transplanted to the permanent growing plot, this is the cheaper way to get the plants started, but the better way is to purchase two-year-old roots and at once plant to well prepared plots.

The soil for planting should be a very fertile loam, pulverized at least twelve inches deep and keep from weeds and grass.

Plant the asparagus about six inches deep so that the tips will be long, when above the ground two or three inches, at which time they are ready to cut.

When the rhubarb plant is well started, in order to have the stems grow long place over each plant a keg or barrel with both heads removed, and in order to get light and sunshine the leaves stretch into long tender stems. If you are a renter and must move every few years, dig up the roots and take them along. These plants bring great returns for but little labor. Try them.

DISKING AHEAD OF THE PLOW

Disking land before plowing is one of the things which all farmers, but particularly those located on the high-priced corn-belt land, should practice. Some men have found it profitable to disk blue grass sod, but the practice has its greatest advantage when applied to stalk and stubble land.

The soil will absorb more water when it is disked before plowing. This has been a very important point in recent years when the soil has seldom been soaked with water. The more water stored in the soil, when the crops are put in, the larger will be the return if the season is dry. The thorough mixing of the stalks, stubble and other surface organic matter with the soil, which results from the disking, is very advantageous. On stalk land, particularly the weighted disk takes the place of the stalk cutter and this at the same time thoroughly mixes the organic matter with the soil. A disk may also be used to cut up green manure crops before turning them under and brings about a more thorough mixing of this organic matter with the soil. One of the fundamental principles in plowing any land is to thoroughly mix the stalks, grass or trash with the surface soil, and this is greatly favored by disking in advance of the plow.

Land with a pulverized surface can be turned with a plow in such a way as to give a much better seed bed than where the disking is not done. The land plows more easily and the pulverization is at the same time more thorough. The disk harrow is one of the most valuable of farm implements, and its use in andvance of the plow is just as important as its use followin the plow.—Missouri Experiment Station.

THE LABOR PROBLEM OF O... MONTANA FARMERS

During the past few years an average of 18,000 families are reclaiming almost a million acres of our Montana lands each year. They are changing the face of the state from sod and pasture land into homesteads and fertile fields. So far, in spite of this unprecedented migration, the federal census returned less than four million acres as "improved lands."

There are, in round numbers, 40,000 acres of land in this state capable of becoming high-grade, crop-bearing farms. Hence, the migration of the past years could continue for the next thirty-five years before our unoccupied lands would be exhausted.

Last year, according to our Commissioner J. M. Kennedy's Report, 800,000 acres were in wheat, 400,000 acres in oats, and 460,000 acres in flax. In that same report is the prophecy that the time will come when Montana will raise 400,000,000 bushels of wheat a year, 160,000,000 bushels of oats, and 60,000,000 bushels of flax. This all is within the reasonable accomplishment of the kind of men who come here to make their homes, but it is not possible in the present generation unless the most efficient methods of crop production are adopted and the transition more emphatically made from the shackled procedure of elementary farming to the more productive system of mechanical operations.

From figures derived from the Department of Agriculture, the cost of raising 20,000,000 acres of wheat would amount to over $220,000,000.00, or to be exact, $11.15 per acre. The cost of raising 4,000,000 bushels of oats would approximate $40,000,000.00, or $10.91 per acre. Of the various items of expense figured in this total cost, rent, interest and overhead charges are insignificant compared with the main item of expense—that of labor. In raising wheat, the labor cost alone is $5.38 an acre; in raising corn, it is practically $7.00 an acre, and in raising oats nearly $5.00 an acre. This is the stumbling block which the pioneer farmer must overcome and which for generations has been the economic Sword of Damocles over the head of the world's agriculturists.

We are better off here in this state than in most places, because of the tremendous fertility of our land. Our farmers find themselves more worthy of their hire than farmers in other states. The Crop Reporter shows that an acre of wheat was worth to the Montana farmer, in 1912, $15.42, as contrasted with only $12.42 to the North Dakota farmer; corn to the Montana farmer was worth $17.85 per acre, as opposed to only $16.40 per acre to the Illinois farmer; barley was worth $19.34 to the Montana man, yet only $11.56, or not much more than half that to the Minnesota farmer—all of this in spite of greater transportation charges which handicapped slightly the Montana producer.

Notwithstanding the more favorable returns to us, the demarkation line between the cost of raising our crops and the price we sell them for is too narrow for pleasant contemplation. Our efficiency experts have here an opportunity to apply industrial methods not only with profit to the individual farmer but to the state itself.

Power farming, whether on a tract of 160 acres or on a section, seems ultimately to be the only form of economical farming. We no longer cut our wheat by hand nor thresh our grain with a flail, neither should we pump our water by the sweat of our brow, nor have our horses do tasks for which flesh and blood were never designed. The motor-driven machines in factories have practically eliminated muscle-requiring jobs for men. Beyond that, motor-driven vehicles in cities have released, from years of servitude, thousands of overworked horses.

One hundred and sixty thousand motor trucks have been manufactured in the past very few years, and of these fully 100,000 are now in service, with the demand increasing faster than the supply.

Following in its suit, the same tendency is seen in carrying on the heavier jobs on the farm. Both necessity and competition are crowding the horse, not out of existence, but into channels more suitable to his endurance and strength.

While the human equation enters largely in the economical result of tractor farming, a recent comparison between tractor and animal power was made after an exhaustive test by the influential Kansas Farmer, and published in its issue of January 9th. This is of peculiar significance, in that, when the cost of raising an acre of produce is analyzed, it is found to consist of the combined costs of a series of distinct operations, each one of which helps to swell the total. In comparing the cost as applied to three of these common farm operations, it is found that under ordinary conditions, the cost of plowing per acre with the tractor was .984, with horses 2.336, resulting in a saving of 56 per cent in favor of the tractor. In harvesting the crop, a second operation, it was found that with a tractor drawing harvesters, the cost was .273 per acre, and with horses as the motive power, the cost was .353, resulting in a saving of 23 per cent by using mechanical power. In a third operation, that of getting the crop to market, the cost per bushel in hauling the wheat by tractor power ten miles on an average road was .023, and with horses .075, making a saving of 69 per cent once more in favor of the oil tractor.

It is in cutting down the expense of each operation which distinguishes a successful manufacturer from the non-money maker. On the farm the same principle holds true. Cutting down the expense of single operations will lessen the total expense of raising an acre of wheat, or oats, or barley.

By adopting mechanical power on the farm, in which the Kansas farmer made their investigations, an average saving of 47 per cent was achieved in three operations, to-wit: Plowing, harvesting and hauling to market. Had the experiment been continued, an equal saving could have been brought about in disking the seed bed and in drilling.

Professor L. W. Chase, head of the engineering department of the University of Nebraska, is quoted as saying that he could perform every operation in raising corn, with the tractor, apart from cultivating.

In the primary investment which our farmers must make either in animal or mechanical power, the question must be brought up that the oil engine, perfected as it is today, not only can do the draft work, which in the past has fallen upon the horses, but it performs other duties with the belt which cannot be done satisfactorily by any other power except steam or electricity. For instance, the operator of an oil tractor controls his own power plant so that he can thresh when he pleases. He can bale his hay at the right time; he can fill his silo when the corn is at its best, and he can operate a husker and shredder, thus making a money crop out of his hay. His spare moments can be used in road making, and even when his outfit is totally idle, it is no operating expense to him.

In contrast to this, the census figures show that the average day's work of a horse is three hours out of the twenty-four. His yearly upkeep expense approximates $80.00, and his hourly wage for work is 16 cents. One reason for this is that the horse is a wasteful fuel consumer. He uses up 30 per cent of the power-giving value of the food he eats in the energy expended in chewing and digesting it. 60 per cent more of his oats and hay are consumed in propelling him by his own muscles from place to place.

In fact, less than 10 per cent, under most ideal conditions, of the food which a horse consumes is delivered on the whiffletree.

On the other hand, the better makes of tractor units are capable of delivering at least 50 per cent of their rated horse power at the draw bar. This, in the course of a year, results in tremendous economy. On one acre it represents only the difference between a small or large profit. On a million acres it represents an asset to the state too great to be ignored. If we begin at the bottom when our habits are just forming and we are all keen for conquest, it will be possible for us to make Montana the most efficient as well as the most pleasant state for farmers to live in.

Her Chief Charm.

"I'm very much taken with the young woman you introduced me to the other night."

"She's a very attractive girl."

"It wasn't her looks I was thinking of."

"No? Her music, then?"

"No; her originality. She didn't tell me that I reminded her of some one she knows."—Detroit Free Press.

Logic.

"You little girl is very pretty. Is she the prettiest one you have?"

"Yes, she is the prettiest of my daughters."

"How many have you?"

"This one only. But that doesn't make any difference. If you should have many daughters the one with you is always the prettiest."—Blanco y Negro (Madrid).

Suspicious Nature.

"So you don't care for poetry?"

"I admire it," replied Miss Cayenne. "But I can't help thinking that it's dangerous to attach much importance to language that is selected because the words rhyme instead of for the purpose of communicating facts."—Washington Star.

George's Reward.

Mrs. Borem Wright—Gracie, why isn't your brother George at our party too? Gracie—George's been a good boy all week, and mamma said he needn't come.—Philadelphia Bulletin

Poor Return.

"Did you get any return from your investment?"

"Yes; the bank returned the company's check marked no funds."—Buffalo Express.

Better a living beggar than a buried emperor.—La Fontaine.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR HOUSEWIVES

Combined Stove Brush and Blacking Container.

A combined stove brush and blacking magazine relieves the task of blacking the stove of much if not all of the muss and soil which it has heretofore been accompanied with. The blacking, in the form of a solution, is contained in a reservoir which is attached to the back of the brush, occupying a position along its length, where it also acts as a convenient handle to be grasped by the operator. After the desired quantity of blacking has been freed on the stove top it is distributed by means of a dauber, which is affixed to one end of the combination.

Household Helps.

When poaching eggs always put a little vinegar in the water.

Oranges and lemons keep well if hung in a wire net in a cool, airy place.

If currants are dried in flour after having been washed they will not sink to the bottom of a cake.

If when chopping suet you add a little ground rice to it, it will not stick to the chopper, but can be minced quite easily.

Clean white enameled woodwork with whiting on a moist cloth.

Every room in the house should be thoroughly aired once a day.

Chicken Pie.

Line sides of a baking dish with a biscuit dough. Cook chicken until tender, season with salt and pepper and a little sage if desired. Put meat into dish lined with the dough, pour in a part of the gravy and cover dish with biscuit dough. Cut a hole the size of a dollar in the cover, and cover this with a piece of dough. While baking remove this piece often to examine interior. If pie is dry put in more chicken gravy.

Fresh Fish Balls.

With a silver fork pick some remnants of cooked fish and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Pass through a vegetable ricer a few hot boiled potatoes; to these add a little fish stock or sauce or cream, also salt, pepper, and beat as for mashed potatoes. To the fish add just enough of the hot potato to hold the fish together. Shape into balls, roll in crumbs and egg, then in fine crumbs, and fry in deep fat.

Buying Kitchenware.

Avoid buying ware which has "seams," cracks and joints where food particles can accumulate. They are harder to wash and likely to become insanitary sooner. A saucepan should have a "lip" on two sides. One piece straight handles are better than the "bail" kind, which becomes hot as it hangs to the side of the pot. Never be tempted into the supposed economy of buying "seconds" in kitchenware. There is always some weak spot, some uncoated place or a "bubble" where the surface is weak.

Omelet, Southern Style.

Separate the whites and yolks of three eggs, beat the whites stiff and dry, beat the yolks until light, then beat into them eight teaspoonfuls of thick white sauce and a speck of cayenne and salt. Fold this into the beaten whites. Fold in six tablespoonfuls of ground baked ham and turn into a hot buttered baking dish. Bake until firm. Take care not to overbake or it will be dry. Sprinkle ground ham around the edge of the dish, stick a spray of parsley in the center and serve immediately.

Beaten Biscuit.

Add a tablespoonful of salt and a tablespoonful of butter to a quart of flour. Rub them together, then add a cupful of milk and, if necessary, a little water to make a stiff dough. Place the dough on a firm table or block and beat with a mallet or rolling pin for fully half an hour, or until it becomes brittle. Spread in half an inch thick, cut into small circles and prick each one with a fork. Bake in a hot oven for twenty minutes.

Renovating Velvet.

When steaming velvet try the following method: Take an ordinary colander. Place this upside down over a basin partly filled with boiling water. Then cover the whole with a thick cloth, place over the gas burner and turn the gas just high enough to keep the water boiling steadily.

Chocolate Bread Pudding.

Crumb three slices of bread and soak fifteen minutes in one pint of milk, add one egg, one-half cupful sugar, one-fourth teaspoonful salt, small piece of butter, teaspoonful of vanilla and one square of melted chocolate. Bake half an hour in a moderately hot oven and serve with whipped cream.

Cleaning Coat Collars.

To renew shabby coat collars take a raw potato, peel it and grate it into a basin. Pour half a pint of cold water over it, and let it stand until it has settled. Then take a piece of clean flannel, dip it into the clear liquid and rub the collar well.