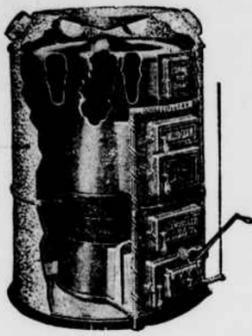


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	Leaves for Spokane and Seattle .....	9:35 p. m.
No. 4	Arrives from Spokane and points west.....	8:50 p. m.
	Leaves for St. Paul and Minneapolis.....	9:00 p. m.
No. 1	Arrives from Chicago, St. Paul and east.....	9:30 a. m.
	Leaves for Spokane, Seattle and west.....	9:35 a. m.
No. 2	Arrives from Spokane and western points.....	7:05 a. m.
	Leaves for Chicago, St. Paul and east.....	7:10 a. m.
No. 229	Arrives from Williston and points east.....	11:40 a. m.
No. 230	Leaves for Williston and east.....	1:25 p. m.
No. 224	Arrives from Great Falls, Havre and west.....	7:00 p. m.
No. 223	Leaves for Havre, Benton and Great Falls.....	7:05 a. m.
No. 27	Fast Mail from east arrives.....	12:50 a. m.
	Leaves for west.....	12:55 a. m.
No. 28	Fast Mail and express from west arrives.....	12:50 p. m.
	Leaves for eastern points.....	12:55 p. m.

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## 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.

### IMPROVING ALKALI LANDS

In Montana are considerable areas of alkali land. Some of these may in time be irrigated. Other areas can never be irrigated, judged from the standpoint of the knowledge possessed at the present time. These lands vary in their value at the present time. For practical use the best of them are of but little value because of the small amount of the production while the bulk of them are of no practical value at all as they produce virtually no vegetation. They are rich in the elements but they possess soda in a degree so marked and also some other ingredients betimes that many forms of vegetation cannot germinate, or if they do germinate, they cannot make a profitable growth. How to neutralize the alkali so that these lands will become productive is one of the most difficult problems that confronts the agriculture of Montana.

Some crops have much more power to grow on such land. Among those that succeed best are sugar beets among roots, oats among cereals and sweet clover among the strictly forage crops. But where the rainfall is quite limited the beets cannot be grown with success, the same is true of oats and it may be true to a certain extent of sweetclover. In some instances there may be so much alkali in the land that none of these crops will grow. In such instances the effort is hopeless until some of the alkali can in some way be removed.

Where irrigating waters, can be abundantly applied to the land, it is quite possible to remove the alkali that crops may be grown and of a character that are unusually good. In the Huntley project some of the best crops of sugar beets have been grown on alkali land. It has also frequently occurred that the most abundant crops of alfalfa have been obtained from such lands. But before this was done, much of the alkali had been carried away in the surplus irrigating water applied to the land. But before this result can follow, drainage that will carry away the surplus water must be supplied. A liberal supply of water in the absence of such drainage would do harm. It would bring the alkali to the surface in increased quantities.

Alkali is oftentimes found in depressed places that may be compared to basins. Some of these may be drained, others cannot without too work being involved. Where drainage is possible, it should be given. That should be the first step. But where there is but little water run off as a result of precipitation, it may not pay to go to the expense.

In many instances alkali land is hard to plow so hard that it can only be done at certain times. The opportunity should be embraced to plow when the work can be done easily or at least when it can be done most easily. If farm manure is obtained it ought to be applied, freely where a fairly liberal amount of rain falls, but less freely where the supply is not large. The manure in its decay tends to neutralize the alkali. In time the land should give larger crops. The soil will be improving in its mechanical texture and each crop grown will reduce somewhat the alkali.

This method is only applicable to small bodies of land. Enough manure is not obtainable to use on large areas, hence some other plan must be adopted. What that plan will be is not certainly known as yet. The plant of most promise to grow on such soils is sweet clover. In the first place it will grow more readily than any other plant. In the second place it will take more alkali out of the soil than any other plant. If the crop is removed by grazing or by harvesting a certain amount of the alkali will be removed. If any plan can be adopted that will allow the clover to reseed itself, the process of the removal of the alkali may be made continuous. But it may not be possible thus to arrange in many instances. Another way is to plow in the sweet clover. This of course means the burial of the alkali again in the clover. But in its decay in the soil it tends to neutralize the alkali. It will also have a markedly important influence on the amelioration of the land.

The difficulty in handling such land is very considerable wherever it is found, when the alkali is so much that vegetation will not germinate at all, the task is for the time being almost impossible. The method by which it can be best ameliorated under such conditions is not yet known apparently. But such areas are not usually of great size. Where irrigation is practiced great harm has been done by using water in excess of the needs of the crops. The tendency has been to carry alkali to the surface. Even where it was present in the soil in quantities that were not harmful while it remained distributed in the same. When it was thus brought to the surface it was present in excess. The trouble has been further aggravated by alkali being carried down in the water from higher level. In this way lands that were greatly productive when first irrigated have become in a way ruined for the time being, and they will remain so until the drainage is furnished. The extent to which lands have become thus temporarily ruined has been very considerable. Nor has there been any excess for it. That, however, is the great sin of irrigation. It seems almost impossible to teach irrigators the value of using only a moderate amount of water. In other words it seems almost impossible to persuade those who can use irrigating waters to combine the use of the same along with dry farming methods.—Prof. Thos. Shaw, in Montana Farmer.

### GETTING READY FOR 1916

By Prof. Thomas Shaw

In the Dakotas and Montana and in fact in all areas traversed by the Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railroads where the rainfall is not usually abundant, the crops have been singularly bountiful during the past season, and largely for the reason of the abundance and timeliness of the rains. But what of the crop of 1916? That should be a matter of as much importance to the farmers as the crop of 1915. Have adequate preparations been made for the growing of that crop? That is certainly an important question. Is it not true that every available acre has been devoted to the growing of wheat that could be devoted to the growing of the same. Fortune smiled upon the farmers and gave them a fine crop, even from the most careless methods of farming. This fact is made abundantly clear by the astounding fact, that in some areas men who sowed a crop in 1914, and never reaped the same, are now bringing suit for a share in the volunteer crop of 1915 that resulted from this sowing.

In 1915 almost the entire country was given up to the growing of wheat. Fortune has favored this gamble. It has given the farmers a phenomenal crop, but not a phenomenal price and now the all important question is what steps should be taken to secure a good crop in 1916.

This much may be said in safety. On summer fallowed land the outcome for a good crop in 1916 is favorable at the present time. The copious rains that fell early in September are very favorable to the growth of wheat for 1916. But much of the summer fallowed land is foul with Russian thistles. What should be done with this land? Some say plow it and bury the thistles. That advice is hazardous. To plow such land would make



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it lie too open and loose to properly hold moisture. Our advice is to drill the wheat right in among the thistles. Soon the frost will kill them. Of course they have no business here. With good farming they would not have been there. Now the question is how to dispose of them. Our advice is drill the wheat in among the thistles where the work can be done, and to do this quickly. The recent rains will certainly germinate the wheat. Soon the frost will kill the Russian thistles. In the winter they help to protect the wheat. In the spring they may be drawn together with the horse rake or some other implement and burned. This may not be scientific farming, but it is farming that makes the best of the conditions that are present.

On corn land the conditions are very similar. Owing to the peculiarities of season, the corn land is probably very weedy, even so, do not hesitate to sow winter wheat into that corn land. The weeds may be taken care of in the spring and on that weedy corn land as good a crop of winter wheat may be expected as on the summer fallowed land that is also weedy. Of course neither the summer fallowed nor the corn land should have been weedy, but we must deal with human nature as we find it.

The aim will probably be to grow large areas of wheat on stubble land. This wheat will be stubbled in. The outlook this fall for a return from such wheat is good. The rains that fell early in September will insure germination. But that is not enough. Should next year prove markedly dry the crop thus stubbled in will be greatly disappointing. Should it prove wet which is very unlikely, the returns may be good.

This means, therefore, that the crop of wheat in 1916 rests largely on the acreage sown on summer fallowed and stubbled in in 1915, is an uncertain on corn land. The wheat that will be quantity. It may be remunerative, but it may be certain failure. Because of this uncertainty, and because of the relatively small amount of sum-

mer fallow land on which to grow wheat, our suggestion would be to the farmers to grow large areas of flax next year and to grow these on fall plowed land if possible. Let every farmer, therefore, turn over every furrow possible in the autumn of 1915 in the hope of getting a crop in 1916. If the plowing is deferred until spring, the chances are just so reduced.

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