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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.

PREVENT PLANT DISEASE

In order to prevent the spread of contagious diseases of plants through scale and other agencies harmful to plant life, the postal authorities have issued regulations governing the transportation of plants, plant products and seeds by mail, according to an order from the department received by Montana postmasters.

The regulations provide that every parcel must be plainly marked. The penalty is a fine of \$100. The postmasters are authorized to accept plants for mailing when the contents are plainly marked on the outside. The packages must also carry sufficient postage to send the parcels from the destination to the nearest inspection terminal and back to the destination. There are a score of these inspection terminals established in the principal postoffices in the state and the packages are opened and contents inspected by the postmasters before they are forwarded to the addressee.

BAD ROADS ARE EXPENSIVE

According to government experts, the cost of hauling a ton of farm produce a mile varies from 17 cents in localities where fairly hard gravel roads exist, to 35 cents per ton in parts of the country where the roads are in bad condition. On the other hand, in those European countries where hard roads prevail, the cost is as low as nine cents per ton per mile. The department of agriculture has estimated that the total haulage expense to American farmers for a year is approximately \$500,000,000. And every dollar of this stupendous sum comes from the farmer's pocket, for he is the one great producer who cannot add the haulage expense to his wares, for the prices he gets are on a delivered basis.

If every farmer would take pencil and paper; figure the amount in tons of the produce and stock he markets in a year; multiply it by the number of miles he must haul it to market; multiply the total by 25, which is about the average haulage cost per ton per mile, and then consider that he could have nearly half of this amount every year if he had an improved road all the way to his market, he would become an earnest good roads worker.

OLIVE OIL FROM SUNFLOWER

The war as a teacher of economy is scoring new results from time to time even among a people already so economical as the Germans. The newspapers are calling attention to the extraordinary increase this year in the cultivation of the common sunflower; it is seen in great quantities in the gardens in the suburbs of Berlin and other cities and along railways everywhere. In previous years the only practical value of the plant was in feeding the seeds to birds; but this year the seeds are used to make an oil which is pronounced equal to the best olive oil for cooking purposes.

A writer is also pointing to further possibilities of the plant. The oilcake left after making oil, he says, is an excellent feed for animals. Whereas the seeds themselves can be roasted and used as a substitute for coffee. The young shoots and undeveloped leaves can also be cooked and eaten as a palatable substitution for spinach.

In Belgium, too, the Germans are turning their thoughts toward discovering new uses for old and familiar plants. An agricultural weekly published by the German authorities there has just been showing that tea can be made from tender, half-grown leaves of the blackberry and raspberry plants which have all the qualities of its famous Chinese cousin, without its nerve-disturbing effect.

A SCHOOL FOR STOCKMEN

After its recognition as a great mining region, Montana came to be known as a stockmen's paradise. No region possesses better all-the-year ranges. Growing competition for land is making it necessary to improve the quality of livestock and market earlier than formerly.

A convention and school of stockmen has been called at Bozeman for the last week of January, to study the livestock problems of Montana. At this meeting stockmen from all over the state will assemble to consider livestock matters, and listen to addresses by such men as Dean Robert Shaw, of Michigan; Professor Cochel, of Kansas, and others, including those best qualified in Montana.

A special school for horsebreeders with demonstrations in horse anatomy will be one of the features, a more detailed announcement of which will appear later. The causes and remedies for sterility in both mares and stallions will be explained by those who have made a special study of the subject.

Professor C. N. Arnett, the recently appointed head of the department of animal husbandry in the State College at Bozeman, will be in charge.

GOVERNMENT CROP REPORT

Washington, D. C., Nov. 8.—A summary of preliminary estimates of crop production and prices for the state of Montana and for the United States, compiled by the bureau of crop estimates (and transmitted through the weather bureau), U. S. Department of Agriculture, is as follows:

Wheat

State—Estimate this year 30,697,000 bu., final estimate last year, 18,356,000; price Nov. 1 to producers, 78 cents per bu., year ago 92 cents.

United States—Estimate this year 1,002,000,000 bu., final estimate last year 891,000,000; Nov. 1 price 98.1 cents, year ago 97.2 cents.

Oats

State—Estimate this year 25,968,000 bu., final estimate last year 18,550,000; price Nov. 1 to producers 29 cents per bu., year ago 39 cents.

United States—Estimate this year 1,517,000,000 bu., final estimate last year 1,141,000,000; Nov. 1 price 34.9 cents, a year ago 42.9 cents.

Barley

State—Estimate this year 2,142,000 bu., final estimate last year 2,135,000 bu.; price Nov. 1 to producers 48 cents per bu., year ago 60 cents.

United States—Estimate this year 236,682,000 bu., final estimate last year 194,955,000; Nov. 1 price 50.1 cts., year ago 51.7 cts.

Potatoes

State—Estimate this year 6,040,000 bu., final estimate last year 5,180,000 bu.; price Nov. 1 to producers 42 cts. per bu., a year ago 67 cts.

United States—Estimate this year 359,000,000 bu., final estimate last year 403,951,000; Nov. 1 price 60.8 cts., year ago 52.8 cts.

Apples

State—Estimate this year 347,000 bbls., final estimate last year 300,000; price October 15 to producers \$1.05 per bbl., year ago \$0.90.

United States—Estimate this year 76,700,000 bbls., final estimate last year 84,400,000 bbls.; price October 15 to producers \$2.15 per bbl., year ago \$1.79.

Flaxseed

State—Estimate this year 3,020,000 bu., final estimate last year 2,560,000; price Nov. 1 to producers \$1.58 per bushel.

United States—Estimate this year 18,400,000 bu., final estimate last year 15,559,000 bu.; Nov. 1 price \$1.63, year ago \$1.87.

More detailed data concerning crop production, quality and prices will be published in the Monthly Crop Report of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

ASHES AS A FERTILIZER

The farmer who burns wood for heating and cooking should carefully store the ashes and not permit them to leach, as they have a peculiar fertilizing value. They not only contain potash and phosphoric acid in appreciable amounts, but also contain magnesia and lime, and when applied to the land they also act indirectly to increase the available nitrogen content of organic matter in the soil.

Ordinary house ashes contain on the average about eight or nine per cent. of potash and two per cent. of phosphoric acid. Investigators have considered that there is enough potash and phosphoric acid in a bushel of ashes to make it worth 20 or 25 cents. Besides that, some 10 or 15 cents additional might be allowed for the "alkali power" of the ashes. This power is that which enables ashes to rot weeds and to ferment peat. The potash content of ashes will be lost if they are permitted to leach, and care should be taken to store them in a dry place.

Wood ashes may be profitably applied as a top dressing to grass land and to pastures, where they will encourage the growth of clover and the better kinds of grasses, which will then crowd out inferior kinds and weeds. Wood ashes also may be used for corn and roots. Because of their lime content they are not so good for

potatoes, although sometimes used for this crop.

Ashes from hardwoods (deciduous trees) are richer in both phosphorous and potash than those from pines and other softwoods (conifers). The ashes of twigs (faggots, for example) are worth more for agricultural purposes than the ashes of heartwood taken from the middle of an old tree. In general, the smaller and younger the wood burned the better ashes. The ashes of coal do not contain enough potash to make them valuable in this connection.

The hulls of cotton seed, according to specialists, yield ashes which contain from 18 to 30 per cent. of potash and from 5 to 10 per cent. of phosphoric acid. Cotton-hull ashes therefore as a fertilizer are much more concentrated than ordinary wood ashes. As a matter of fact, in the opinion of some investigators, the ashes from cottonseed hulls contain such a large proportion of potash that they might do considerable harm to certain crops if they were used in large quantities.

These ashes have been used with advantage for manuring tobacco, and have in times past brought as much as \$35 or \$40 a ton in New England. One objection to their use is that they vary widely in composition. At the

present time, however, the hulls are used for feed to such an extent that it is difficult to secure their ashes for fertilizing purposes.

SUGAR BEETS PROFITABLE

Farmers of the midland empire recently received checks aggregating \$341,000 for beets delivered so far this season to the Billings sugar factory. That sum represents the first payment made this season. A second and larger payment next month. In all, the sugar factory will pay \$1,500,000 for the 250,000 tons of beets contracted for this season at \$6 a ton. The factory is now cutting over 2,000 tons of beets every twenty-four hours.

A seedy-looking man with a consuming thirst found himself in that embarrassing financial condition that precluded the possibility of the purchase of a drink. He cudged his brain and finally hit on a scheme. Rushing into a drug store, he called out excitedly:

"A lady just fainted outside. Have you got any whiskey?"

"Why, yes; here's some," said the sympathetic clerk, pouring out a liberal quantity.

"Ah, thanks," as he gulped it down. "It always upsets me to see a lady faint."

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