

Soils, Crops and Fertilizers

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Inquiries of Progressive Farmer readers cheerfully answered.

SEED CORN.

I.—The Best Varieties for North Carolina Growers and the Best Ways of Buying.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture, as a result of four year's comparative tests of over thirty varieties of corn, has found that, on a well-drained sandy or loam soil underlaid by a good sandy clay subsoil at a depth of from eight to twelve inches, Cocks' Prolific variety of corn has averaged a higher yield of shelled corn per acre than any of the other varieties tested, when all were grown on the same type of soil and received the same fertilization and cultivation. As a result of one year's test at the Statesville Test Farm which is located on a red clay soil with a stiff tenacious red clay subsoil, it was found last year that Biggs' variety of corn produced a larger yield of shelled corn per acre than any of the other eighteen varieties in the test.

TESTS SHOULD RUN THROUGH SEVERAL YEARS.

It should be remembered, however, that it is unsafe generally to accept as conclusive the results from one year's test with any variety on any type of soil; because the results obtained the following year, on the same soil with the same fertilization and with identical cultivation as far as is possible to give, may be a reversal of those secured the first year, due to a difference in weather conditions prevailing during the growing season; hence a variety test should be carefully conducted for four to five years before attempting to draw anything like definite conclusions.

With the twelve varieties of corn tested at the Edgecombe farm in 1902, it was found that Cocks' Prolific produced on the same soil with identical fertilization and cultivation, 14.6 bushels of shelled corn per acre more than native corn that was well selected from the barn. Placing corn at sixty cents per bushel, this gives a gain in favor of Cocks' Prolific of \$8.76 per acre. Another variety that has stood up well in our tests is Weekley's Improved. This variety is a tolerably early one and can be grown with more safety than most others, where only a short growing season is afforded. It has a little smaller ear and cob than Cocks' Prolific. Both have a decidedly strong inherited tendency to produce two or more ears per stalk, the grain of which will weigh from 56 to 57 pounds to the measured bushel.

BUY SEED CORN IN THE EAR.

In buying seed-corn, farmers should require their dealers to ship it to them on the ear and supply a statement as to where it was grown. This is essential, because if corn grown under greatly different soil and climatic conditions is bought, it is seldom that satisfactory results are obtained, although the variety may be a good one, until it has become thoroughly acclimated, which will usually require from two to three years. The force of this statement was well illustrated in our experience at the Edgecombe Test Farm in 1901 with Leaming corn, which was brought from Illinois for our comparative variety test. At the Illinois Experiment Station, Leaming corn had proved to be one of the best varieties raised in that State, but when brought to North Carolina it gave the smallest yield of twelve varieties in our test. It is likely, however, that after the variety has become thoroughly acclimated, it will prove a very prolific variety for our State.

DON'T BUY THE CHEAPEST VARIETY.

It is not always cheapest to buy the seed corn that can be purchased for the least money. In

our tests we have often had as great a difference as ten bushels of shelled corn per acre excess from the best varieties our native corn. Now placing native corn, selected in the usual way, at sixty cents and the best field selected varieties at one dollar and fifty cents per bushel, and assuming a bushel of corn will plant six acres, it will make the seed of land planted in native corn cost ten cents per acre, while that planted from the best varieties cost twenty-five cents. Now deducting the difference in cost of seed which was fifteen cents, we have a gain in favor of the most prolific varieties of \$5.85 per acre, when ordinary shelled corn is selling at sixty cents per bushel.

THE SAFEST PLAN OF BUYING.

On the other hand, because a variety is advertised in extravagant superlatives and quoted at an advanced price is not always a guarantee of its worth. Hence the best method to pursue in purchasing seed corn is to buy only from the most reliable seedsmen and have it shipped on the cob, so as to enable the buyer to see just what he is getting. This precaution is advised because it is a well established fact that many seedsmen buy whole surplus crops of corn and without a particle of selection, other than removing rotten ears, shell and screen it and place it upon the market, after thoroughly advertising it, at an advanced price many times the market price of ordinary corn of which it is often no better—and sometimes decidedly inferior.

C. B. WILLIAMS.

N. C. Department of Agriculture, Raleigh.

What Our Mountain Farmers Are Doing.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

I certainly have enjoyed your special cotton edition. I am not in a cotton country, and never raised a pound of cotton in my life, but there seemed to me so much sound common sense and good business principle in the articles on that subject that I felt a desire to grow cotton just to see what I could gain from them.

We are having plenty of rain, and spring work promises to get away behind. It is giving me a fine chance to get fences up, ditches down, and everything ready for the rush. When it pours down I take my hand and grind tools for next summer's use, overhaul implements, fix up stables more conveniently, curry the horses, etc. As soon as the rain stops we light on the fence building, cleaning up old corners, making ditches, and stopping some that have made themselves.

The plows are all ready to hitch to, and whenever the ground does get dry enough we will roll it lively. It is pretty tough to have two or three nice drying days, get everything out of the way and say as the sun sets clear and fine: "Well, Sam, we'll hit that hill field in the morning, and by the time we get it turned the bottom will do,"—then wake up in the morning and hear it "drip, drip, drip."

But "it is the Lord's; let Him do as seemeth unto Him good." There are plenty of other things to do, and we farmers cannot afford to complain of the decisions of our Divine partner. Without Him we indeed can do nothing.

I have a bottom field of sixteen acres that was in corn two years ago. In September that year I sowed rye at the rate of 1½ bushels per acre. Used the little Cyclone broadcast seeder, with which I could walk through the middle and sow five rows at a through without the stalks being in my way. Put it in with the one-horse, five-tooth cultivators that I tend corn with, closing the frame and running twice in a row. Got a very nice stand. Pastured it after the corn was out getting some fine cattle feed.

The rye crop was very light. One of my neighbors said I sowed it in the wrong time of the moon. Perhaps so! When the crop was cut I had the boys make the shock rows straight, and as far apart as possible. Prepared the "lands"

between shock rows with the disc harrow, laid it off close, and drilled cow peas with a little fertilizer. Used my corn drill with regular corn plate set to drop at intervals of eight inches. Used about one-third bushel peas per acre. Cultivated them twice, and in spite of drought cut seventeen rousing loads of pea hay that was very rich with peas.

That pea hay is wintering my cattle. They cleaned up the straw stack January 1st. Fodder was all gone a little later. But the pea-hay holds up. Am feeding it to horses, too, with good results, while the cows yield more milk than they ver did. Calves are growing nicely. Have 24 head of cattle now, and have had from that to thirty all winter. Butcher every ten days or two weeks, but calves keep coming, and hold the total number about the same. Am hoping to produce more and better pea-hay this year. Think I will try drilling some in alternate rows with sorghum sowed thick, with a fair amount of fertilizer.

Am getting anxious to get my potatoes planted. Shall not be real happy if I raise less than five hundred bushels of the Irishman's favorite "fruit."

I want to build a horse and cow barn this summer, and some poultry houses. Have plans drawn and lumber cut, but want to get them up and see how they suit me. Then, if you would like them for your readers, will be glad to submit copies of the plans.

The rain seems to have ceased and I must get to bed, so I will be ready to "make things happen" in the morning.

Sincerely yours,

H. M. DANIEL.

Madison Co., N. C.

Farm Notes from the East.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

Sometimes I really wonder if the readers of The Progressive Farmer all over the State are behind with their work as the farmers in old Pasquotank are. Why, at this writing (March 11th), the ground is so wet that we can't stir it at all, and it has been in this condition since the first of February. Good many farmers have not planted May peas yet, and the seed of many of those that have planted (including the writer) have rotted.

The time for planting Irish potatoes has come, and according to the best information available the crop through this county is to be a bumper one. Almost every farmer is planting a few barrels, and a good many of the larger truckers are preparing to increase their crop by half. Seed potatoes have reached the fancy price of \$4.50 per barrel, and yet our commission men are selling all they can get. But this, however, does not effect the farmer that raised his own seed and some to spare.

We are glad to see our farmers interested in the crops above mentioned, and many other truck crops, for this very thing, taken at large throughout the country, has been a leading factor in bringing the price of cotton where it is now. Each individual, farmer (many a one is unconscious of the fact) who scrambled out of the calamity he found himself in a few years ago, by sowing more grass, raising more cattle, and rotating his crops, thereby raising his supplies at home, has not only benefited himself, but has benefited his neighbor.

The present condition of things can be carried on indefinitely, if the farmers will only be cautious. Don't get it in your head that you can't make any money out of anything but cotton. Almost anything that you can raise will sell, and remember that labor last year was scarce and very high, and with us what is left is very common, but they will be demanding a dollar per day next summer, and I very much fear that cotton raised with one dollar labor will not be a profitable crop, unless the farmer raises a supply of hog and hominy, as well as plenty of fruits and vegetables.

Yours truly,

KNOX ALL.

Pasquotank Co., N. C.