

Fall Fertilizing vs. Spring Fertilizing

To the editor of The Ranch:—

In your issue of November 14th, page 12, appears Mr. J. A. Pearson's article on "Fall Fertilizing." I have learned to doubt the wisdom of generalizing about fertilizer matters and if Bro. Pearson means his opening sentence to be generally applied must take issue with him. He says "I have become fully convinced that they (commercial fertilizers) do the crop immediately following no good." He says further on, "I have tried them exhaustively on rich and poor land, and without result on the first crop." Knowing nothing as to the character of the soils in question I can only speak as to the effect of the fertilizers used on my own farm during the past twenty years.

Twenty years ago I began farming in my present location, shot-clay and gravelly upland. The first thing that impressed itself on my mind was the impossibility of getting satisfactory crops without added fertility in some form. Stable manure in sufficiently large quantities was out of the question; commercial fertilizers seemed the only alternative. In the twenty years that have elapsed I have never tried to raise a berry or vegetable crop without fertilizer, except for an occasional check over. Do I obtain results the first year? Most emphatically yes. I frankly admit the superiority of stable manure when it can be obtained, but in its absence I never hesitate to undertake to raise a crop of cabbages, corn and potatoes without anything but commercial fertilizers and this on upland too poor to grow a marketable crop of potatoes without manure. With some forms of fertilizer like nitrate of soda,

the different potash salts and superphosphate the effect is marked and immediate. In the case of nitrate of soda applied in spring not later than June 1st, so far from not helping the first crop there will be nothing of it left to help a fall crop; all the fertilizing element will be consumed. This will not apply to bone-meal, fish or any of the commercial fertilizers having an animal source, but even these if properly applied will more than pay for themselves by their effect on the first crop. Personally I would never advise applying fertilizers in the fall except on strawberries, grass grain or other crops that will take care of all fertilizer as fast as it becomes available.

I have always compounded my own fertilizers and still prefer to do so as I can modify them to suit the different crops and varying soil. I have said that stable manure is to be preferred to fertilizers and if forced to choose between them would take the former, if I could get it; but better results can, in my estimation, be obtained by combining the two. Last spring I raised an excellent crop of early cabbage; heads weighing about five pounds each, without a pound of stable manure, and on an adjoining plot a good crop of early potatoes, by using a light dressing of stable manure and about 800 pounds of commercial fertilizer to the acre. In the middle of the latter plot I left two short rows to which no fertilizer was applied; the difference all through the growing season was marked and at digging time the yield of these two short rows was not 50 per cent of the balance of the patch, taking hill for hill, yet except for use of the commercial fertilizer there was absolutely no difference in the treatment of the crop.

I could multiply instances like the above that have occurred during the past twenty years and my advice to farmers on shot clay and gravelly upland is go slow about fall fertilizing except on some growing crop. Never use nitrate of soda until the crop is up, then use it sparingly and repeat the dose at intervals of two to four weeks. Seed all your potatoes and truck patches etc. with rye or vetch or some other growing crop in the fall to plow under in the spring. If any one wants to test this matter for himself let him take the following: Superphosphate 300 pounds, fish scrap or bone meal 300 pounds, sulphate of potash 100 pounds, nitrate of soda 100 pounds, ground lime stone 300 pounds. Mix all together, except nitrate of soda and if for potatoes apply in hill or furrow at planting time. Apply 50 pounds of nitrate of soda as soon as plants are up and balance about three weeks later. Do not mix air slaked lime with any animal fertilizer or manure, if you are afraid to mix the ground limestone as above, apply separately before or after planting. Do not let seed or potatoes come into direct contact with commercial fertilizer, plant seed first, cover to depth of one-half inch or more then apply fertilizer.

There is no question in my mind but that Bro. Pearson's land is very different from mine. With me nitrogen seems absolutely essential to success, yet the quantity needed is not large. The above quantities are intended for one acre of potatoes or



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one-third acre of cabbage, etc. What I have said above is intended to apply to garden crops on shot clay and gravelly uplands.

FRANK BINNS,
Shelton, Wash.

A filthy hen house is the best breeding place for lice and mites.

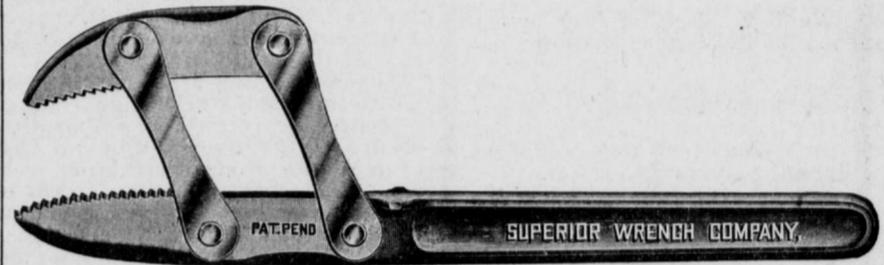
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