

HOW TO OBTAIN A GOOD STAND OF ALFALFA

By Chester L. Marsh

Alfalfa is by no means a new crop for Arizona. It is much older than the State itself, being introduced by the Spanish settlers, and later in 1854 a shipment of alfalfa seed was received at San Francisco from Chile. Probably the first alfalfa grown on a commercial bases within the irrigated valleys of Arizona was from this latter source. The culture of alfalfa increased rapidly, and in 1910 more than 50 per cent of the cultivated land in Maricopa County was planted to this crop which was worth approximately \$2,500,000, or more than one-half as much as all the field crops produced that year.

Along in 1914 and 1915 when cotton was beginning to be produced, the acreage of alfalfa started to decrease, and in 1920, after the high cotton prices of the year before, the farmers went "cotton wild". Dairy cows sold for little or nothing and thousands of acres of fine young alfalfa was plowed up and the land planted to cotton. That year the dull market came and the prices dropped, it was then the value of a few acres of good alfalfa was realized.

Let us hope that this lesson will be remembered, and that the acreage of cotton and alfalfa will become more balanced, swinging to neither one extreme nor the other. This must come in time because alfalfa is the cheapest and best way to bring a depleted piece of cotton land into first class condition.

No, alfalfa has not lost its place in Arizona. It will always be one of the most important crops of the state.

Since alfalfa has been grown so long in this state, the cultural methods best suited for its production are fairly well established. Now alfalfa is not a difficult crop to raise, but it does require careful work in order to secure a good stand. However, once the stand is secured it is one of the easiest crops to maintain.

There are many points that must be given careful consideration if a good stand is to be secured, a discussion of which would fill a large book. So let us restrict our efforts to the value of using good seed, and the selection of the variety best adapted to our locality.

When a good dairyman goes out to buy a bull, does he take the cheapest one he can find? No, of course not.

He selects a bull of good breeding, one that will give him the highest possible production. Is it not as important to buy alfalfa seed that will give production?

A piece of land may be left in alfalfa from three to eight years, or even longer. Suppose you had your choice of 35-cent seed that was known to be good, and 15-cent seed that you knew nothing about, which would you take? You might buy the cheaper seed and take a chance on getting a stand thus saving about \$3.00 an acre. But did you save \$3.00? In all probability the good seed will yield at least 100 lbs., or even more, hay per acre for each cutting than the alfalfa from the cheaper seed. With hay at \$12.00 a ton, five cutting will pay back the \$3.00. Then for every year following there will be an increased income of three or more dollars per acre. Does good seed pay?

The following case is a good example of the value of good seed: A farmer in the Salt River Valley having a piece of uniform land free from weeds, worked it all alike at the same time. In the fall he planted it to alfalfa, about one-half of it with seed from one seed house, and the remaining part with seed from another firm. The first half come up in fine stand and yielded considerable hay the following summer, while on the other half he secured a lovely stand of bur clover, weeds and very little alfalfa. The field proved worthless and will have to be replanted this fall. Would it have paid to find out something about the seed before it was planted?

The state law requires that all seed sold by a firm or individual in lots of over 10 pounds for the purpose of planting, must have a label bearing the following information:

1. Commonly accepted name.
2. Per cent purity. This refers to foreign agricultural seeds and inert matter.
3. The percentage by weight of weed seeds.
4. The name of the weed seed contained.
5. The approximate percentage of germination.
6. The full name and address of the vender of the seed.
7. Name of the state where such seeds were grown, and if Arizona the locality, and if this is unknown, a statement to that effect.

This law has been a great benefit to the farmers by cleaning out the unscrupulous seed dealers. However, the law is not enforced as strictly as it should be, and much poor seed is still being passed out to the farmer.

It is a relatively simple matter for the farmer to test his own seed. Just take a fair sample of the seed, place it on a flat surface, pick out the weed seeds, foreign agricultural seeds, and inert matter. This will give a fairly good index as to the value of the seed. Then place 100 seeds between damp cloth or blotters at a temperature around 70 degrees. The number of seeds sprouting after a period of days give the per cent of germination. For more accurate work a sample may be sent to the Agronomy Department of the University of Arizona. There a purity and germination test will be made and a certificate returned to the sender. Six samples in any one month and twelve within the year will be tested free. After that a charge of 25c is made for each purity and germination test. Tests made on mixed seeds are charged according to the time required to make the test.

If every farmer made it a point to get this information before planting, he could get better stands with less seed, and his fields would be more nearly free from weeds, all of which means more profit in the end.

Of course the value of alfalfa seed does not depend entirely on its purity or percentage of germination. A knowledge of the variety as well as the strain is equally, or perhaps more, important. The seed and vegetative growth of the several varieties are so nearly alike, it is practically impossible to distinguish one from the other. This has resulted in much unscrupulous dealing on the part of the seed venders. The only sure way to get good seed of a particular variety or strain is to know the field from which it came, or buy from an absolutely reliable seed dealer.

What variety is best adapted to Arizona? This is a very easy question to answer. In the lower valleys we are not interested in the hardy group which is especially adaptable to the severe winters of the north central states. The Arabian variety, although it will yield one more cutting than the common alfalfa, is very unprofitable because of its tendency

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F. O. B. AUCTIONS

A New Marketing Bet Arizona Vegetable and Fruit Growers May Find Profitable to Analyze

By Chas. O'Connell

Shipping point inspection is the busiest youngster in government and state marketing today. Shipping point inspection means protection for both buyer and shipper. It means that a competent inspector under a joint arrangement between the U. S. department of agriculture and the state marketing agency, inspects cars at loading and issues a certificate as to condition of the car's contents.

The idea is to sell while in transit carlots of fruits and vegetables F. O. B. loading points, on government inspection. This idea originated last year in the Imperial Valley during the cantaloupe brawl. It was tried out as an experiment and proved very successful. The grape growers of California adopted the idea later on that season and an extremely satisfactory distribution resulted. Today there is no reason why the offering should not embrace the entire fruit and vegetable field.

It is not a question of taking the shippers word as to what he put into the car or the receiver's say so as to what he received. A trained inspector, a disinterested party of the third part, tells the true story of what is in the car for a specified service charge.

Selling at auction is not new, but auction sales based on shipping-point inspection certificates are decidedly new.

Two companies have been pioneers in the field. The National F. O. B. Auction Company with central offices at Pittsburg and the F. O. B. Auction company at Chicago. Auctions are held simultaneously in a number of different cities, the buyers bidding against each other by telegraph. Descriptions of the stuff offered for sale come over the wire from producing centers, wherever they may be, Arizona, California, or Florida. The descriptions of the contents of cars come in one day and are put before the buyers early the next. The offerings are given numbers and catalogued in mimeograph form and are sent out to the trade in time to reach the buyers in the first mail the day of the sale.

Right after lunch the buyers assemble, take a comfortable seat, and from their hip pockets pull out their catalogues only. The auctioneer mounts his platform, the telegrapher gets in touch with the other cities on the wire and the battle is on.

Keep in mind that the cars are all in transit. And their final destination at present is unknown. Of course, as yet these cars have not reached a diversion point. Perhaps you would like to follow one of the sales.

Lot No. 52, offered by F. O. B. Auction Company in Chicago. The catalogue shows that this car is Pacific Fruit Express No. 78880. It was shipped on the fifth of the month and routed over the S. P. and E. P. & S. W. railroads to Kansas City. It contained 300 crates of Arizona lettuce, graded to size of head, 75 crates of one size, 150 crates of another and 75 of still another. The description of the car reads: "Dry car, tight packed, well iced, car lined with paper and \$20 extra for icing, (this means that the buyer must pay for icing the car as well as for the freight)."

Directly following this information is the report of the inspector which reads as follows: Lettuce, 7 to 8 per cent of heads bursted, a few heads, about one and one-half per cent, show slimey condition. The remainder of the stock firm, fresh, crisp, green, well trimmed and free from defects. This appears to be a good car of lettuce and should be fairly close to Kansas City.

The bidding starts. Chicago asks, "How much am I bid?" Cleveland bids 80 cents, which means some buyer in the auction at Cleveland has started the ball rolling. Then word comes over the telegraph wire that Baltimore bids 90 cents. Cleveland comes back with 90 cents and Boston raises to \$1.00. The bidding continues until Cleveland buys at \$1.10.

The Cleveland buyer deposits his check with the auctioneer who deducts his commission and the remainder is sent to the shipper. This means then, that before the car actually reaches the buyer the producer of the lettuce has received and banked his check.

The advantages of F. O. B. auctions may be listed as follows:

Orderly marketing. The stuff goes to where it is needed most.

The best price is received.

Transportation charges reduced, due to carlot shipment.

Culls kept at home.

Better grading and packing insured.

Prompt payment for product.

Middleman and producer unfairness eliminated.

Changes market from buyers' market to sellers' market.

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to be short lived. Most of the alfalfa grown in Arizona belongs to the common group and is the ordinary purple-flowered, smooth alfalfa. It is a good yielder, well suited to our conditions, and taking everything into consideration, is very satisfactory.

There is however, one outstanding variety for Arizona. This is the Hairy Peruvian. It is a vigorous grower, grows well in cool weather, recovers quickly after cutting, has good seed habits and is the heaviest yielding alfalfa grown in the state.

The Peruvian plant has fewer stems and is less branching. It is taller and more upright than the common alfalfa. The stems are quite woody and it is necessary to cut early. Because of its coarseness and few stems, it is necessary to plant about 20 pounds of seed per acre, where 15 pounds of common alfalfa seed is plenty.

Before buying alfalfa seed the purchaser should have information on the following three points: The name of the variety, the section of the country in which it was produced, and the quality of the seed with regard to both germination and purity. This information is not difficult to obtain, and the first cost in buying seed is many times offset by the higher yields that are sure to result. In other words, cheap seed may be more expensive than high priced seed.

CAPRIFICATION OF THE FIG

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That is the task with which man in his greed for gain entrusted her.

Henceforth, when you smack your lips and exclaim about the syrupy goodness of the fig, give a thought to the tiny fig wasp and her sacrifice.

The pollen she carried and worked herself to death to distribute is entirely responsible for the lusciousness of the fruit.