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## AGRICULTURE FOR GRADES

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### THE WONDERFUL ALFALFA CROP



**A**LFAFALFA is a clover-like plant and is very highly prized as a forage crop in many parts of the United States (Wherever it has been grown or used). It was first introduced into California from Chile in 1854. From here it has gradually spread to all the irrigated sections of the west. In the early part of the nineteenth century it was introduced into Texas from Mexico and from that state it gradually spread to other non-irrigated states of the plains. It was introduced into New York from Europe as early as 1791, but its function has been confined to limited areas, until recently. Now farmers of eastern and southern United States have awakened to the fact that alfalfa is king in animal husbandry. Corn is taking second place.

Why is it that farmers have been so slow in taking hold of this valuable forage crop? In nine cases out of ten failures in alfalfa-growing, the lack of knowledge of the crop is the cause of failure. To start an alfalfa crop, the farmer must adapt his farm practice to the discoveries of science. He must know the needs of the crop, and know how to supply them. We are too much in the habit of giving up because we saw another try and fail. Because alfalfa was tried at this school a few years ago without success is no reason why we should not try it again.

I notice that there are a few plants that persist in growing in the field at the left of the walk, going to the carline, regardless of the field's being plowed and put to other crops for a number of years since alfalfa was tried there and pronounced a failure. Where one alfalfa plant persists in growing two can be made to grow, is my theory.

The soil must be well drained, fertile, free from acid, and reasonably free from weeds, if we would expect success in starting alfalfa.

Well-rotted manure is a satisfactory fertilizer. We will apply a heavy coat of manure to the clover sod where alfalfa was tried before, plow early and work the ground thoroughly, and plant to late potatoes. The potatoes will receive thorough cultivation to free the surface of weeds. The following spring the ground will be plowed early. We will then have the decomposed manure and weed seeds that were plowed under the previous spring mingled with the surface soil. This plot will be thoroughly tilled up to the early part of June to rid the surface of weeds and establish a fine seed bed. Apply lime to correct acidity.