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About The Farm

By John J. Inskeep, County Agent

Subterranean clover seed production offers a good opportunity for good cash return on many Clackamas county farms. We suggest its production for the many who are looking for a good cash crop.

Last winter during a farm roundtable discussion at Clarkes grange hall, someone in the group wondered why Clackamas county has lagged in production of subterranean clover seed. As we remember, Ben Elmer called this matter to the attention of the group.

Alton Marshall then observed that we have pretty much taken sub clover seed as a salvage crop and without planting primarily as a seed crop. He also observed, "I think we have slipped a little when it comes to fertilization."

Sure we have an occasional failure even when using expert methods. For instance, there was no good sub clover harvest weather in 1955. But, by and large, sub clover seed production is a rather dependable farm venture.

Charlie Steiner, Beavercreek, has recently taken a ton and a half of Tallarook sub clover seed, in the dirt, for cleaning.

"This is the production from five acres of red hill land. I expect to have better than a ton of clean seed. The way I look at it, not every year is a good sub clover year, but it's a good gamble. I am planting 12 acres sometime during September."

Charlie came in for suggestions for fertilizer prior to planting sub clover this fall. The five acres will be disced and fertilized for volunteer seeding. The seven additional acres have been summer fallowed. This field has had a limestone application in the past, but is possibly on the acid side.

Our suggestions were pretty much as follows. For each acre: 200 lbs. of 11-48-C ammophos, 40 lbs. agricultural borax, 100 lbs. landplaster. Broadcast and harrow in immediately prior to planting.

For those who have a fertilizer attachment to the drill, apply the fertilizer with the seed. This is the ideal way.

Two hundred lbs. of 16-20-0 ammophos might be used in place of 11-48-0. There are several fertilizer firms in the area which will make up fertilizers to the customer's specifications.

The saving in labor incident to field application is evident.

Why use 40 lbs. of agricultural borax? Over 1,000 soil samples from Clackamas county have been analyzed by the state soil testing laboratory at Oregon State College during the past three years. These included approximately 400 analyses for boron. Of these, only one has shown a boron content sufficient for best growth of legumes - that is, where borax, which contains boron, has not been used previously in the fertilizer program.

During the past few years we have noted a chlorotic or mottled condition in subterranean clover leaves. This condition is always accompanied by stunted growth. Growers have attributed the cause to a virus disease. This past year a fertilizer experiment involving sub clover and alta fescue was conducted on the Walter Fisher farm, Carus, by Jackson.

At harvest time sub clover plants in the plot receiving boron appeared normal and the yield greatly increased. We could infer that boron corrected this condition in this particular instance. We could guess that boron might effect similar results on other farms. It is expensive, and there is not much to lose unless the grower uses too much boron.

This is a warning. Boron is a trace element. Use of too much boron is just as detrimental to plant growth as not using enough. Without a soil analysis, do not use over 40 lbs. of borax in any one year. On leguminous crops, 20 lbs. per year would appear about right in subsequent years.

We do not yet know all of the plants which respond effectively to the boron treatment. Boron effectively controls celery crack, cracking and distortion of beets and carrots caused by boron shortage, water core in apples, and the bronze deficiency symptoms displayed in many alfalfa fields. Borax is quite generally included in fertilizers for cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli fields by canners who contract crops in this county.

On the other hand, snap bean plants are quite sensitive to boron applications. Snap bean fields produce better when the boron content is relatively low.

Palmer Torvond, county extension agent, Washington county, reports that use of boron has increased red clover hay and seed yield in that county. He suspects that borax should be pretty generally used for all red clover fields unless this element other crops during the previous season.

Don't go hog wild in use of boron. Our suggestion is to try 40 lbs. per acre applications on a farm trial basis leaving check strips for comparison. We still have lots to learn on this subject.

And don't expect boron to perform miracles on soils deficient of limestone, phosphates and potash. Boron may be very useful on the individual farm, but its use is not necessarily a cure-all.

Many of the wiser topdressed their pasture with commercial fertilizers just after the recent heavy rains. We do not expect our cows to produce on starvation rations. The same is true of our valuable hay lands.

Our suggestion is to spend the equivalent of the value of a

ton of hay on each hay and pasture field annually. Many of us wince at the idea of using 20 dollars worth of fertilizer on the meadow but gladly put out 40 dollars or more for alfalfa when the spring hay shortage appears - which it does with regularity.

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