

Winter Months on the Farm

How to Improve Them

Selecting and Testing Seeds

How to Choose the Best Grains—
Winter Jobs That Result in Bigger Yields

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The death knell of scrub stock, whether animals or plants, is sounding far and wide. Where formerly scrubby parent stock was once commonly used, they are gradually but surely declining in popularity. The farmer is awakening to the value of good blood. In the live stock industry breeders have educated the general farmer to an appreciation of the benefits and greater profits possible through careful selection and mating of pure-bred foundation stock. State legislation has aided in the eradication of scrub and grade stallions. Public sentiment has cheapened the erstwhile popularity of scrub and grade bulls, boars and rams, but only recently has the farmer's attention been directed to the careful selection and testing of all his seed grains and the use of only pure-bred strains of grains in his crop rotation.

By increasing the production of corn in the United States one bushel per acre an annual increase of 115,000,000 bushels would result. To augment the oat and barley yields one bushel per acre would mean annual increases of \$4,000,000 and 7,000,000 bushels respectively. When one considers that the use of carefully selected seed will not only increase production one bushel per acre but will easily render possible the enormous importance of universal knowledge concerning the value of pure grain seed is evident.

Importance of Proper Curing.
When taken from the stalk, corn usually contains from 20 to 30 per cent. of moisture, which, unless reduced to 10 or 12 per cent., is likely to injure the quality of the seed. In the northern states, where the seasons are short, we find the most convenient way of ridding the corn of this excessive moisture is by the use of artificial heat.

Corn should never be placed against the south side of a building, where there is likely to be strong sunlight, as the rays of the sun will injure the vitality of the seed or the side of the ear turned toward the sun. If corn is cured by hanging under a porch or under the roof of the corn crib, it should

be stored away in some dry room where it will not absorb moisture from the outside atmosphere before hard freezing weather begins.

Where kitchen or furnace room can be used for curing corn small hanging devices may be used for the holding of the corn. A simple and practical method is to use cord, tying the ears so they are a safe distance apart for drying. Another device is to use double cord, placing ears between them so they can be held securely and hung on a nail or hook by a loop.

An attic which can be ventilated and has a chimney passing through it, or is directly over a heated room, so that it can be kept at a fairly uniform temperature through the winter, is an exceedingly good place to cure corn.

Testing Seed Corn.
Each ear of corn should be tested before planting and all ears rejected that do not germinate and show lack of vigor or vitality. Fifteen average ears of corn will plant one acre, using four kernels to the hill, placing the corn three and one-half feet apart between the rows.

The most perfect seed ears having kernels of a uniform width should be used for seed. These should be selected from the store room and laid out on the floor or on tables to be convenient for making the test. Care should be taken to place the ears in a building where they will not be disturbed during the period of the test, otherwise, if disarranged before comparison can be made, the results will be for naught.

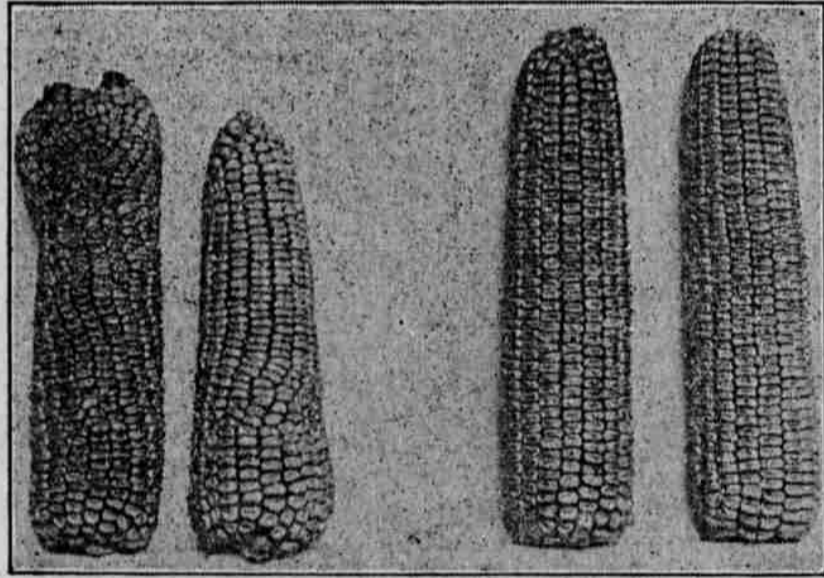
The ears should be arranged in sections of tens to correspond with the sections in the seed tester, which are usually in tens. A nail should be driven between each section and the various sections, as well as each individual ear of each section, numbered. At least four sections (sometimes six) are taken singly from different parts of each ear and placed directly in front of the ear from which taken, until kernels have been removed from all ears.

The preferable device for testing is a box 20x40 inches square and usually six inches in depth. Sawdust is an excellent material to use as a germination bed, but it should first be boiled in water in order to kill bacteria or molds. The sawdust should be placed in the box about three inches deep and should be moist but not soggy.

A piece of good muslin upon which two-inch squares have been drawn with an indelible pencil and numbered to correspond with the sections and individual ears to be tested, is pulled tightly over the sawdust and tacked securely to the sides of the box. The kernels of corn taken from ear No. 1 are put into square No. 1 and from ear No. 2 in square No. 2, until all are used. A plain moistened cloth is placed over the kernels and a muslin sack made for the purpose and partially filled with sawdust about two inches thick is placed on top of the cloth and pressed down firmly over the corn.

The tester should then be placed where it will be held at ordinary room temperature or a little warmer. During the day the sawdust reaches a temperature which it holds during the night even though the outside temperature drops several degrees the germination bed will be fairly constant.

After five or seven days have elapsed the sawdust pack should be removed and the cloth rolled back upon the corn, being careful not to disturb the kernels underneath. The kernels should be inspected to note if any have absolutely failed, if each kernel has put forth both root and growing point, and the vigor or vitality shown in the germination. All seed which does not germinate should be rejected.



The Good Seed, on the Right, Will Reproduce Itself, While Those of Bad Form, on the Left, Will Tend to Continue Their Freakish Characters.

Before shelling the seed, remove the butts and tips, as these grains are of different shape and will neither plant uniformly nor give a uniform germination. If the butt and tip kernels are planted at all they should not be used with the middle kernels, but should be planted by themselves.

The prospective seed buyer should first send to the seed dealer for a sample of small seeds, such as alfalfa, clover, etc., upon which he can make a germination test. A simple seed test can readily be arranged. Take two tin plates, one a little larger than the other, cut a piece of cotton flannel to fit in the larger plate, soak the flannel in water, then squeeze out the surplus water, and put the flannel in the larger of these plates. Then place 100 or more seeds in this plate, cover the seeds with a similar pad, well moistened with water, and then cover with the smaller tin to retain the moisture. The tester should then be placed in some convenient place where the temperature ranges from 70 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

The tester should be examined every 24 hours to see that the pads do not become too dry. It is advisable to loosen up the lower pad occasionally to let in oxygen, which will aid in the germination of the seed. In about three days the seed will begin to germinate and at the end of five days they should all be germinated.

Good seed should give a germinating test of at least 90 to 95 per cent., better still, if it reaches 100. No clover seed should be sown that does not test at least 80 per cent.

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GOOD TOAST RARELY FOUND

Patience in Making It is Necessary and It Should Be Neither Soggy Nor Too Crisp.

There is nothing so rarely found as toast that is well made. Few cooks are successful with it, yet it is not difficult to get right.

The chief reason of many failures is lack of patience. It is so much easier to cut thick, uneven slices, to remove the crusts and do several platefuls at a time that that is the usual method.

Appetizing toast should be cut thin without crusts, cooked over a clear bed of coals until a delicate brown on both sides, then buttered and sprinkled lightly with salt and put back in the oven for a minute for the butter to soak in.

Never let toast stand. Far better wait for it than have too much cooked at once. If the family is late in coming to the table do not start to toast until they are eating their cereal.

The best toast is made over open coals, but it can be nicely toasted in the gas oven if closely watched.

Appetizing toast is neither soggy nor so crisp that it tastes like dried chips. The best is made from a close grained bread a day old.

Do not serve in great chunks; toast must look well, besides being properly cooked, to be appetizing.

Toast that has grown cold can be served by putting it on an old plate, covering it with cream, butter and salt and allowing it to soak into the bread in a hot oven.

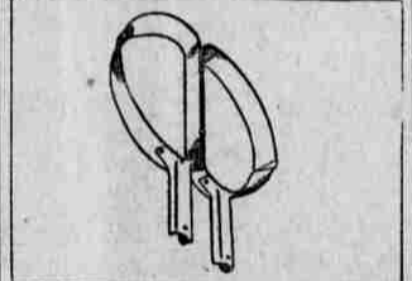
Where one prefers to butter toast at a table it must be served hot in a folded napkin and just a few slices at a time.

In making milk toast use a little thickening in the milk, otherwise your toast will be soggy and thin.

DOUBLE FRYING PAN IS NEW

Device of an Iowa Man That Saves Fuel, Labor and Space on the Stove.

Economy of fuel and space is enabled by the double frying pan designed by an Iowa man. This is not to mention the saving of time and labor. The new fry pan is made in two parts which are hinged at the inner sides and can be folded over to take up the space of one section when hung upon the wall. Divided into two sections, as it is, two things can be cooked in it at one time. While meat is being fried in one side, canned corn or tomatoes can be heated in the other, or if there is no meat to be fried, two kinds of vegetables may be



cooked in it. The advantage of a utensil of this kind is manifest. In the first place, it saves fuel because two things can be cooked over one lid of the stove. In the second place, it gives the cook fewer pans and pots to watch and leaves her freer to attend to the manifold duties of preparing dinner. It also takes up less space on the stove than two single pans.

Caramel.
Many women who do not venture to prepare caramel at home because of the danger of burning instead of browning the sugar do not know that the druggist has it at its best. Delicious custard is made with maple sugar for sweetening and caramel for coloring and the two flavors blend excellently. The caramel is useful for coloring sauces as well as for flavoring custards and creams.

Oyster Omelet.
Parboil a dozen oysters in their own liquor; skim them out and let cool, add them to the beaten eggs either whole or minced. Cook the same as plain omelet. Thicken the liquid with the butter rolled in flour. Season with salt, cayenne pepper, and a teaspoon of chopped parsley. Chop up the oysters and add to the sauce. Put a few spoonfuls in the center of the omelet before folding. When it is dished pour the remainder of the sauce around it.

To Remove a Spot.
An excellent way to remove a spot from a dark woolen skirt is to rub it hard with a piece of soft old linen. In nine cases out of ten the spot will be absorbed by the linen without any cleaning fluid being applied.

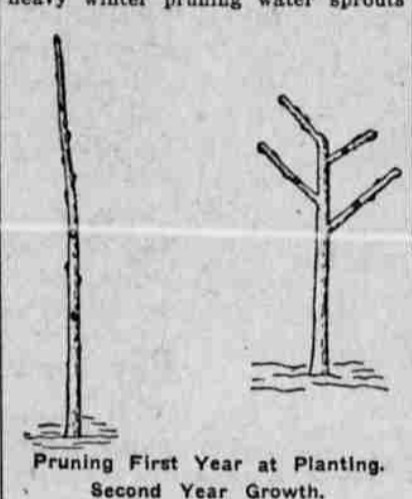
Old Oilcloth.
A good way to use up worn oilcloth is to cut it into squares and use it for table pads to put under hot dishes. If the color or the pattern is not ornamental, use the oilcloth for the underside and cover with kid or raffia.

MANY DEFINED PRINCIPLES IN PRUNING FRUIT TREES

Should be Adapted to Different Varieties—In Forming Top of Tree Several Distinct Systems Are Practiced.

(By R. W. FISHER.)
It is known that heavy pruning of the tops of fruit trees in winter or during the dormant period has a tendency to produce wood growth, or cause the trees to grow larger. This is due to the fact that when pruning is done when the tree is dormant the plant food which is taken up by the roots early in the spring is concentrated into a smaller portion of the top and results in the very rapid growth of the parts left. Weak trees are often forced into vigorous growth by heavy top pruning which is done in the winter or early spring.

When vigorous plants are given a heavy winter pruning water sprouts



are often produced, because there is more plant food sent up from the roots than the top area can use, resulting in the growth of dormant lateral buds.

Heavy pruning of the top in the summer or when the tree is in an active state of growth has a tendency to check the wood growth, causes fruit buds to form and sometimes results in the growth of water sprouts. The wood growth is checked because when pruning is done when the leaves are performing their function of assimilating plant food a large portion of the area which is making plant food is removed and the supply of prepared plant food is checked, thus causing a decrease of growth over the whole tree.

Heavy root pruning checks the growth of wood by cutting off the supply of moisture and crude plant food. This results in an increasing number of fruit buds. In sections of the country where fruit trees have a tendency to start bearing very young and to produce large crops of fruit, it is often necessary to do such pruning that will cause wood growth rather than the production of fruit buds.

In forming the top of the tree several distinct systems are practiced. The shape, however, should be largely determined by the natural characteristics of the tree. Low-headed trees produce the best results in many localities. They are able to stand heavy winds without injury, the fruit is nearer the ground and makes harvesting a crop and all orchard work much easier, and the trunks are not so likely to be injured by sun-scald.

If one-year-old trees are set out, the pruning the first year will consist in cutting the top back to within eighteen or twenty-four inches of the ground. The cut should be made just above a strong bud. During the first season three or four branches should be permitted to grow; the others rubbed off soon after the buds expand.

In the spring of the second year, if more than three or four branches grew during the first summer, they



should be cut out, making the cut near the main stem and parallel to it. The remaining branches should be cut back to within three or four buds of the main stem, making the cut just above a strong bud.

In the spring of the third year all but three or four branches are cut out, including the terminal branch, and the others are cut back to within three or four buds of the stem from which they grow, the idea being to produce three or four well developed and well situated twigs on each branch each year, and having the branches so placed that the tree will grow into a symmetrical form and be

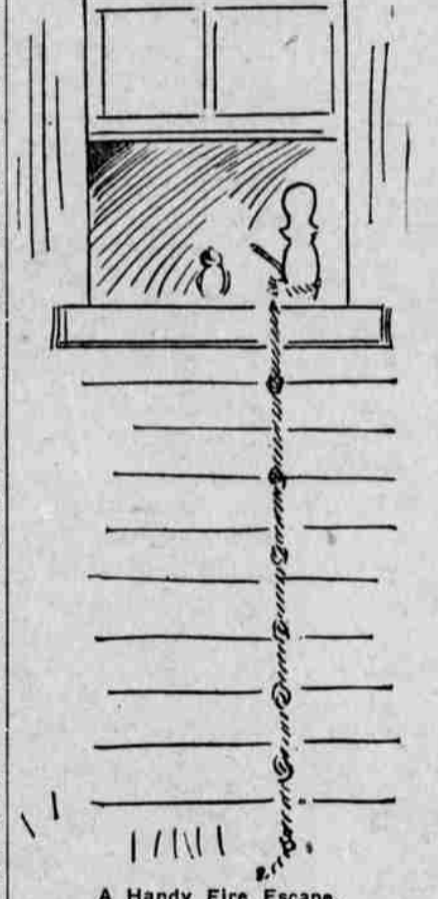
open enough so that the sunlight can get into the center of the tree, thus adding much to the color of the fruit. By cutting each season's growth back to within a few buds of the last season's growth the tree is made to grow much stockier than it otherwise would.

The pruning after the third year is very similar to that given in the third year. Three or four twigs are selected on each growth, the others cut out, and the remaining twigs cut back. All cross limbs or limbs that are too close together, or that rub together should be cut out.

MAKES HANDY FIRE ESCAPE

Stout Knotted Rope Makes Excellent Substitute for Ladder—Any Cool-Headed Person Can Use It.

It is not feasible to have a ladder at every window, and in case of fire people in the second story are often in danger of their lives. For safety, tie large knots in a strong rope, coil it neatly on the floor or some place where it can be found immediately in the dark. Make a loop at one end so it may be looped around a bed post or a stout hook placed in the window frame. In case of fire throw out the loose end of the rope and scramble out. Any cool-headed person can wriggle down a rope of this kind, al-



though they may blister their hands or get a slight fall in doing so, but even so, it is better than being roasted.

GROWING HERBS IS ESSENTIAL

Nothing Can Quite Take Their Place in Household—Seeds of Annual Sort Should be Sown Early.

(By R. G. WEATHERSTONE.)
No garden can be considered complete that does not include a goodly variety of herbs, for nothing can quite fill their place in the household.

The seeds of annual sorts should be sown early, but of the perennial varieties (and many of the best are that) the seeds sown in mid-summer will produce strong plants that may be freely cut from the following year.

Make the soil rich, mellow and fine before sowing the seed. When the seedling plants are large enough they may be transplanted to the border-beds, or the fence-row where they can grow undisturbed year after year.

When the roots become large they may be divided and new plants started if more are wanted, though two or three plants of one variety will furnish all a good-sized family will need, as the leaves should be cut several times during the season.

The leaves should be cut when fully grown and before the plant blooms, choosing a clear, dry day for the work. Spread in a cool, shady room to dry, as drying in the sun or by the fire spoils both color and flavor.

When thoroughly dry powder the leaves by rubbing between the hands and store away in tight cans or boxes.

Pruning the Third Year. Old Tree Trunk Properly Branched.