

Oregon Specialty Crops Reflect Benefits To All

By E. R. JACKMAN,
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Specialty crops have been increasing in Oregon the last few years, reflecting benefits all the way 'round. Working on the theory that a farmer specialist may be able to command a little more money per acre or per hour of work, Oregon farmers are growing such a long list of things that the list itself would fill a whole column of the Gazette Times—or more.

Of course farmers have been aided in this specialization by the state's amazing diversity of climate—perhaps more diverse than that of any other state. We have climate about like that to be found in most any part of the inhabited globe except the tropical parts. At that, one county, Curry, grows palms and eucalyptus trees. Rainfall varies from 5 to 100 inches and elevations in Oregon may be sea-level or 10,000 feet above, depending upon where one is standing at the time. As a result we grow hops, pansy seed, cascara bark, digitalis, lilies, salmon ferns, lawn grass seed, mink, and a hundred other things that scarcely enter into the scheme of the farmer in North Dakota or Kansas.

Let's look at the seed business first because that is the biggest of all our specialty crops. Nearly every county in the state grows seed of some kind, and Oregon is literally the nation's seed warehouse. The coast produces nearly 100 per cent of the nation's golf course seed. Most wheat farmers aren't golfers, although a few have been bitten by the bug, but when one takes a trip East or South and sees folks chasing a silly little ball around, they are doing it on a turf made green by bentgrass seed from Oregon.

Then there is the cover crop seed business. Vetches and peas for plowing down in the South—I didn't say for plowing down South—I said for plowing down in the South—were seeded on about 350,000 acres in Oregon this fall. That makes up about 90 per cent of this kind of seed in the nation and should return around \$8,000,000 in 1942 to Oregon farmers—if all goes well.

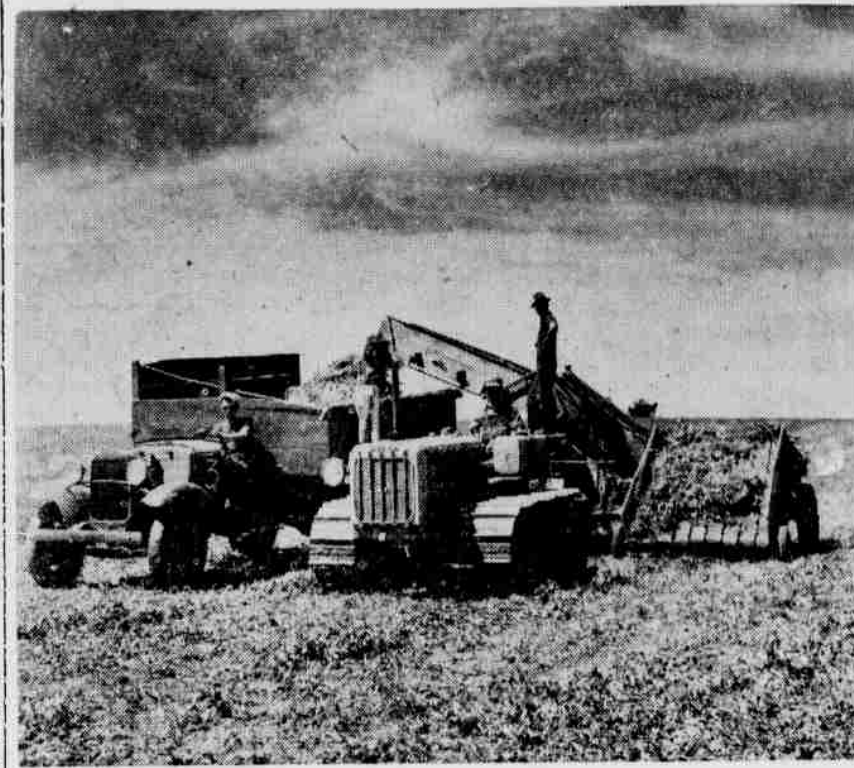
Alfalfa and the various clovers are growing for seed production on 50,000 Oregon acres scattered all over the state. Crook, Deschutes, and Klamath counties grow about one-fifth of the nation's alsike clover seed, and Malheur county grows more red clover seed than any other United States county. Josephine and Malheur counties grow half the nation's Ladino clover.

Union county—sparked by the Blue Mountain Seed Growers association—is a factor in the grass seed business. In fact for the last four years the association has handled the largest pool of crested wheat grass seed in the United States—and returned growers more net money. Union county also has the highest average yield of Chew'ng fescue seed—another lawn grass.

That doesn't exhaust the seed business by any means. Wallowa county, for example, is growing seed of canning peas, and the Hermiston country produces strawberry clover. We have sugar beet seed in Jackson and seed of native wild grasses in Lake and Harney counties. But enough of seed, or we'll all go to seed reading about it. Anyhow, Oregon can justly be called a hayseed state—we grow it by the trainload. There really is hayseed in Old Man Oregon's whiskers.

When Hitler blitzed the low countries he blitzed the world's bulb business as well. Holland has traditionally been the home of the tulip, but modern crossing and breeding techniques have produced dozens of varieties and strains of bulbs of which most of us don't even know the names. Fortunately, in anticipation of European war, Oregon farmers had been experimenting with bulbs all over the state and when the emergency came a big group of our people had learned, as the lumberjack put it "to buck bulbs" and they are now bucking them to the tune of a million dollars. Gladiolus, narcissus, iris, tulips, lilies, dahlias

A SPECIALTY CROP THAT CLICKED



The pea harvest in parts of eastern Oregon has proven a boon to wheat growers. This is a typical scene of what takes place when the peas are taken from the field.

NATION ONLY AS STRONG AS ITS SOIL

By C. D. CONRAD
County Agent, Morrow County

The American farmer has come to the point where he must be content with making his living and continuing to make that living, on the land he now possesses. The time is past when there is new land to turn to when the old is worn out.

Soil erosion by wind and water is one of the farmers' oldest enemies. For centuries the fertile topsoil, from

—and many others all grow in Oregon. Ever notice what pretty names the bulbs have? Some people would rather grow a narcissus than a hog just because it sounds nicer.

Fiber flax is another product not grown much in the United States except in Oregon. We had over 10,000 acres of it in 1941, and the acreage is growing fast in order to make our linen handkerchief users independent of foreign countries. Even those hardy souls who don't use 'em may need linen for sewing up shoes, and if they join the navy they'll find linen cordage of various kinds. Anyhow, Oregon is the only state doing much about fiber flax.

Then in fur farming we are stepping up. We are growing mink coats by the thousands and fox collars, and all sorts of lesser animals that we may sell for muskrat and buy back again as Hudson seal. We have a few sensitive and sensible folks who are even growing—stand back please—skunk. The farm income from our fur farms is well over the half million mark.

"For you a rose in Portland grows," but even more important, for the gardens of North America carloads of rose plants grow in Oregon. Roses and other nursery plants turn off close to a million dollars for Oregon farmers specializing in those things. Oregon is also the principal state shipping holly at Christmas, and western Oregon farmers get out and gather wild fern and ship it by the carload.

One could ramble on pleasantly through a whole page full of odd and unusual products. We have a million dollars' worth of filberts and about the same amount of walnuts. We have luscious berries not grown much any place else and even \$75,000 worth of cranberries, grown in bogs along the coast. When you buy a gooseberry pie in Kansas City or Atlanta, the chances are its filling came from Woodburn in Marion county. Hops are hopped up by the war much like the ultimate consumers may be, and they are giving the growers over \$5,000,000 this year.

Peppermint oil, sugar beets, flaxseed, canning peas—all these things will swell the total of these specialty crops to probably \$30,000,000 in 1942—maybe more.

These crops occupy land that formerly grew wheat, oats, barley, and hay, so their production is not only helping the growers, but it is helping those who produce the other things. When we take 100,000 acres out of wheat and grow Austrian winter peas on that acreage, it is a real help to other wheat growers.

the people at the present time recognize that the soil is the vital public resource of the nation held in trust by the farmers for all the people.

We know that many farmers are not financially able to put into practice needed conservation practices. For these reasons, government agencies have been set up and provisions made in other agencies for helping the farmers conserve our nation's soil.

The Soil Conservation Service, the Soil Conservation Program of the AAA, organized State Soil Conservation Districts, and Land Use Planning are all working to help the farmer with his erosion problems by supplying needed technical and financial assistance and help in working out and planning his agriculture on a sound, long-time basis.

Farmers of Morrow and part of Umatilla county recently organized the Heppner Soil Conservation District including more than 700,000 acres. This district is the largest of its kind in Oregon. It extends from the crest of the watershed in the south about half way across the county.

This and similar districts are under the direct supervision of five farmer supervisors, three of whom

are elected by the farmers and two appointed by the State Soil Conservation Committee.

Being organized under such a district puts the farmers in a better position to obtain available help in erosion control. Help will be at a minimum during the present world conflict, but following the war the farmers of soil conservation districts, organized and having their programs drawn up, will be more apt to receive the available help then.

The work that individual farmers can do without public assistance will probably outweigh all else if they will study their farms and plan their crops and farming practices in such a way as to hold their soil before it is gone.

As soil is lost, so is moisture, and the moisture-holding properties of the soil, and nothing need be said of the importance of moisture in the Columbia Basin.

Farmers can not only do a great deal on their own, but now have public backing and government assistance in combating their soil losses. This assistance came too late to save all of our soil, but if we avail ourselves of the machinery now set up to help us help ourselves our soil losses in the future should be cut to a minimum.

CONDON GRAIN GROWERS

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We urge all people of this area to attend the E. O. W. L., the farmer's strongest and best organization.



We wish the League its usual convention success.

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