

Farming and Agriculture :-: Special Features :-: Interesting Observations

NEWSY FARM NOTES

By Agricola

HEREDITY IN POULTRY

During recent years there has been a great improvement in the laying qualities of our domestic poultry. This is the result of several factors, the most important of which is the development of early maturing strains. At the inception of the industry, pullets were recorded as laying from 250 to 300 days after being hatched. By a persistent selection birds have been produced which commence to lay 150 to 200 days after leaving the egg. On the other hand a study of the proper rationing of poultry has made it possible to prolong the laying season, by replacing the material used up in the stress of continuous egg-production. To such an extent have these (and other lesser factors) improved individual production that in 1925, in an egg-laying contest at Agassiz B. C., one of the contestants laid 351 eggs in 285 days, a record which will not readily be excelled. Thus, it may be noted, has selection—the utilizing of heredity—and environment, in the way of treatment, housing and feeding, combined to produce a phenomenal individual. That this was not an accidental achievement is shown by the fact that the pen of ten hens, of which this was one, established an official record averaging 292.7 eggs for the year.

Heredity has produced some remarkable results in other ways. By Mendel's Law of heredity, color, pattern, structure, chemical composition, and resistance to certain diseases, are found to be governed by either dominant or recessive characters. If a Barred Plymouth Rock male be mated to a Black Langshan hen, all the offspring will be barred, because the barring is a dominant character and excludes the recessive character, the black. The dark coloring has however only receded into the background for a generation, for on mating any two individuals of the offspring their chicks will without exception show a proportion of three barred to one black, the recessive character thus re-appearing. In this generation, too, all the males are

barred (like their grandfather,) and also half of the hens; the other half being black like their grandmother. On mating a Black Langshan male to a Barred Rock hen, the male offspring are all barred, and the female offspring are all black. No matter how these are mated among themselves, one-half of the resulting male chicks will be barred, and the other half black; and the same is true of the female chicks. This sex-linked inheritance is more complex, but fundamentally follows the Mendelian Law. The color result in the second generation—the "grandchildren"—depends entirely upon which sex of the original cross-mating contained the dominant barring pattern.

This curious law of dominants and recessives applies to every living thing, both plant and animal, and is responsible for those resemblances to their ancestors, which we often notice in our acquaintances. In the case of poultry the matter has been so studied that a scientific poultryman can tell the sex of his chickens by their color—an obvious advantage.

The Mendelian Law as applied to poultry in other respects, will be the subject of a future article.

ONIONS FROM SETS

Young onions from sets are the easiest and the quickest garden crop. The reason is that they are half grown before they are planted. Now is the time to get in a second or third planting of sets as most gardeners already have a row or so of sets at work the sets are on sale well through the month and plantings can be made at intervals of two weeks or ten days to maintain a succession until onions from seeds get big enough to make a mouthful.

The soil can't be too rich and well worked to suit onions either from seed or from sets. The better the soil the better the young onions and the faster they will develop. Sets can be sown thickly as they are not to occupy the ground long enough to crowd each other. An inch apart is ample room.

Seeding And Planting Flowers

W. T. Macoun, Dominion Horticulturist

It frequently happens that those who are unacquainted with the habits of flowers and what weather conditions they will stand, lose either seeds or plants by sowing or planting them at the wrong time or under unfavourable soil conditions. The temptation is to sow all flower seeds outside as soon as the soil is dry enough in the spring not thinking of the cold, frosty weather which is to follow, and the result being that many seeds rot in the ground without germinating and others germinate but soon after the plants appear above ground they are killed by frost. It is, then, desirable to have some idea of the kinds of seed which may be sown very early and those plants of which the seeds should not be planted until the soil is warmer or danger of frost nearly over.

Among the hardest annual plants grown for their flowers are Sweet Alyssum, Calendula or Pot Marigold, Candytuft, Cornflower, Coropsis, Cosmos, Eschscholtzia, Larkspur, Linari, Nasturtium, Poppy, Virginian Stock, Sweet Pea. These may be sown as soon as the soil is dry enough. Among the tender annuals are Nicotiana, Zinnia, Aster Stocks, Balsams, seed of which should not be sown until the soil heats up somewhat and there is little danger of frost after the plants come up. The temptation is to plant Geraniums outside too early, especially when they have been inside all winter, but in most places in Canada they should not be planted outside until near the end of May or the beginning of June. Gladiolus corms may be planted as soon as the soil is dry enough but Cannias and Dahlias should not be planted until danger of frost is about over. The earlier that Roses are planted in the spring, the more likely they are to grow.

There are various theories as to the strength of the sets, some arguing that red sets are the hottest and white the mildest, while the yellow sets also have their advocates as to mildness and sweetness. As a matter of fact, there isn't enough difference, if any, to make the choice important. The white and yellow sets may look more attractive in bulk and that is about their only advantage. The test is as to whether they are sound or not. The bulbs should be firm and not soft and yielding to be of the highest quality. As the season advances and they start to sprout, the bulbs naturally will be softer than early in the season, but this will not prevent them from growing and developing good young onions.

You may rest assured of getting equally good young onions whether you plant red, white or yellow sets. The available supply should determine the selection. If all three are handy, pick your favorite color. If the dealer happens to have only red ones, don't believe that old story of their being so much stronger than the others. A white skin in an onion is no sign of weakness.

Potash For Potato Crop

R. C. Parent, Supervisor of Illustrations Stations for P. E. I.

For the production of a profitable crop of potatoes a supply of available potash as well as nitrogen and acid phosphate is absolutely necessary.

Potash aids in the improvement of the general vigour of the crop and is necessary for the production of starches and sugars; this, of course, in the potato is of prime importance.

Granting that the potato crop needs a goodly supply of potash for optimum production, scientists show that unless there is the proper balance between the three essential elements the best results cannot be expected and that growth will only be in proportion to the lesser element. We are also told that a 200 bushel crop of potatoes will take from the soil 60 pounds of potash but that there is an almost unlimited supply in most soils. What then is the proper amount of potash to use? This will depend somewhat on the nature of the soil, the previous crops, the use of barnyard manure and tillage operations.

For the past two years, on the Prince Edward Island Illustration Stations, 200 pounds of potash in a 4-8-8 mixture, supplied at the rate of 1,200 pounds per acre gave an average yield of 368 bushels of potatoes per acre. These potatoes were grown on sod land, and in the majority of cases the fertilizer was supplemented with a small dressing of barnyard manure.

During the past two years it has been brought to the attention of the Experimental Station at Charlottetown that 400 pounds, and in quite a few cases 800 pounds of muriate of potash, were being sown per acre. Other chemicals were used in proportion. To demonstrate the effect of large quantities of potash on the potato crop, the following experiment was tried on four of the Prince Edward Island Illustration Stations in 1923.

Fifteen hundred pounds of a fertilizer mixture in which the nitrogen and acid phosphate were constant and in which the potash varied from none to 420 pounds, were sown on five plots on each of the stations. The following average results obtained:

With no potash ... 100 bushels of marketable potatoes per acre.
 With 300 pounds ... 150 bushels of marketable potatoes per acre.
 With 210 pounds ... 200 bushels of marketable potatoes per acre.
 With 300 pounds, 330 bushels of marketable potatoes per acre.
 With 420 pounds, 321 bushels of marketable potatoes per acre.

For demonstration purposes this same experiment will be continued for a number of years and, while the results given are only for one year there are many experiments to show that the percentage of potash in the mixture should vary somewhat with the nature of the soil. Under the conditions existing on the Prince Edward Island station a 4-8-8 mixture appears to most economically meet the plant food requirements of the potato crop.

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Improvement of Sandy Soils

L. E. Wright, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, Ont.

All soils and particularly sandy soils, require the addition, from time to time, of humus forming material if they are to be kept productive and to give a maximum return from the application of plant food as manure or fertilizers. Humus may be considered as the natural storehouse of nitrogen and when this constituent is abundant in the soil, it is associated with a liberal supply of nitrogen, the most expensive of all plant foods when it becomes necessary to purchase it in commercial fertilizers. Sandy loams which are well supplied

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with organic matter (manure) will have a greater moisture holding capacity than a high moisture holding capacity which are essential factors for maximum crops in seasons of scant rainfall. The chief means of increasing the organic matter content of the soil is by the use of barnyard manure and green manuring (ploughing under a green crop, preferably a legume e.g. clover).

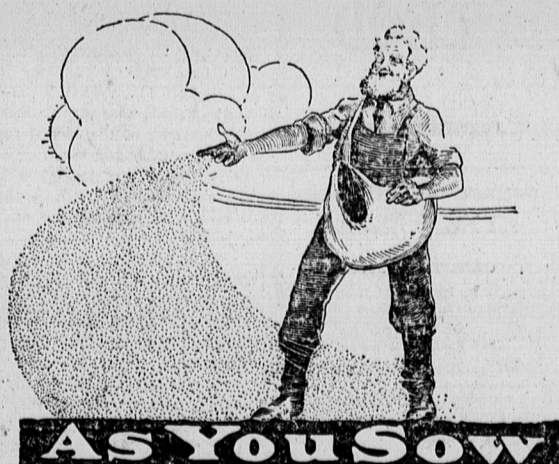
Commercial fertilizers may be used to advantage in improving crop yields on sandy loams, and will usually give best results when applied in conjunction with manure or a green manure. The nature and rate of application of the fertilizer mixture employed will depend largely on the past treatment of the soil and the crop to be grown. It has been found, in the experimental work of the Division of Chemistry, that complete fertilizers supplying all three elements of plant food, nitroloams. A fertilizer mixture more par-

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