



MODERN FARMER



Canadian Garden Service 1950

By Gordon Lindsay Smith

First Plantings

Seeds, bulbs and other things we set out or plant in Canada are grouped under three or four main classifications.

In the first are those that go in just as early as possible. Frost will not hurt them at all, may in fact do them good. In this group are sweet peas, nursery stock and grass seed, also practically anything else of a perennial nature.

The second group includes those that like to grow early and will stand some frost. These are mostly vegetables like lettuce, radish, spinach, garden peas, perhaps a short row or two of beets and carrots. One can risk the first sowing of these about as soon as the soil is fit to work. True, a real hard frost will damage them, but a few degrees will not.

Tender and Semi-Tender

In the third category are plants usually described in the seed catalogue as semi-tender. They will withstand some pretty cool weather, even a degree or two of frost, but they don't like it. They should not be risked outside until practically all danger of frost is over. In this group will be most of our annual flowers - cosmos, zinnias, marigolds, petunias - and all the vegetables mentioned in the preceding paragraph, as well as beans, potatoes, corn, cabbage, perhaps even a few tomato plants.

Honey Has High Energy Value

Many centuries have passed since man first discovered that the sweet substance which he gathered from wild bee's nests in virgin forests, was a delightful and nutritious food. Over three thousand years ago honey was recognized as a source of quick energy by the Greeks whose athletes used it during their training period in preparation for the Olympic games, says C. A. Jamieson, Apiculturist for the Department of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Honey is almost wholly carbohydrate food consisting chiefly of two sugars, fructose and glucose (levulose and dextrose), which account for slightly over 75 per cent of the total constituents. These sugars are in a condition in which they can be absorbed directly from the stomach without preliminary digestion. When ordinary sugar such as cane and beet sugar are taken into the body, they must first be broken down into the simple sugars, fructose and glucose, before absorption can take place.

In addition to the sugars there are small quantities of minerals in honey which are known to be of value for growth and health of the body. The mineral content of honey at 0.2 per cent is not high but includes such elements as iron, copper, sodium, potassium, manganese, calcium, magnesium and phosphorus. The darker honeys usually contain a slightly higher percentage of these minerals than light honeys.

Because of its high carbohydrate value honey is particularly beneficial for those participating in sports and for those engaged in strenuous work. It is also an excellent food for children and is recommended by many doctors as a sweetening agent for the milk of a baby food.

Honey is not surpassed by any other natural food for its rapid assimilation along with its high energy production.

Fruit Setting

OTTAWA, May 8, 1950 - My fruit trees blossomed heavily last spring but set very few fruit; how can you explain it? This is a frequent matter of inquiry. There are numerous of measures which can help fruit setting, reports C.R. Ure, of the Experimental Farm at Morden, Man.

A heavy blossoming followed by a small crop of fruits may be explained by an insufficient fertilization or pollination. Insects, mainly bees, are the principal agents of pollination. Cloudy, cool or windy weather at flowering time prevents or retards insect movement. Native insects may be inadequate. A hive or two of bees in the orchard ensures better pollination. So does shelter around the fruit plantation on windy days. For a few trees, hand pollination may be employed.

Pollination may be adequate and yet the trees will be unfruitful because of faulty fertilization - non-viable pollen or incompatible elements of fertilization. Most tree fruits are self-fruitful and many varieties are partially or totally cross-unfruitful. This is a reason why the plantation of two or three varieties of each kind of fruit is recommended.

In apple and crabapple, this practice ensures a set of fruit. Plums are less certain. It is desirable to include in the plum planting one or two varieties recognized as good pollinizers and blossoming at the same time as commercial varieties. Information on the subject can be obtained at your nearest Experimental Farm.

It is also important to recall that fruit setting, followed by maturity of the fruit, is an end product of a whole series of changes spread over many months. Failure of any step in this sequence may be a cause of unfruitfulness.

General agricultural principles are involved: proper cultural methods essential to the development of a strong and vigorous tree; full exposure to sunlight as shaded trees

DUAL PURPOSE MEADOW

OTTAWA, April, 1950 - Livestock farmers are asking for a suitable grass-legume meadow which is able to produce a good first cutting of hay and thereafter supply abundant aftermath recovery for mid-summer and early fall grazing. Such a crop may be termed a dual purpose meadow.

Experiments have definitely established that if alfalfa is adapted it can admirably meet the above requirements. However, a pure stand of alfalfa is seldom used for pasture, but this legume is precious when compounding hay-pasture mixtures.

A good dual purpose meadow in a short rotation may be obtained by sowing the following mixture: Timothy 8, red clover 4, alfalfa 8, alsike 2, pounds per acre. For well-drained clay-loams or clay soils that will be used for hay one year only and then mowed for two or more years the following mixture is highly recommended: timothy 4, brome 5, orchard grass 3, red clover 4, alfalfa 4, ladine 1, alsike 1 or 2 pounds per acre.

Many other mixtures may be sown under different conditions and for certain specific purposes. The two given above are worth while trying for a dual purpose meadow. For further information write the Division of Forage Plants, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, Ontario.

NEWSY NOTES

By Agricola

THE TOWHEE OR CHEWINK

The early summer of 1918, I was working south of the Hillsboro, not far from the city. I had been told to tidy up the front of the farm house and was busy at it, when I heard something frantically scratching the dead leaves on the other side of the fence. I knew that hens were not allowed there, so I quietly looked over to the picket to see the culprit. It was a bigish bird, rather bigger than a sparrow, with red eyes, and black, white, and rufous plumage; a gay fellow indeed. He evidently did not like the look of me, for he shot away full speed, "and I saw him no more," as John Bunyan says. For that matter I have not seen another of his kind since then, and quite agreed with the Maritime lists that label the Towhee as rare. It is something of an achievement to have seen one!

The names "Towhee" and "Cheewink" are derived from the bird's song. Some writers call the eastern variety the "Red-eyed Towhee" and others list it as the "Jores". As to diet, the Towhee probably fares like the Fox Sparrow, but as it is so rare it is of little importance to the farmer.

Easter Towhee, Cheekink. AOU. 587. Rare visitor; Male, Iris of eye red. Head, back, throat, and breast, black. Wings black. Outer web of primaries white; tail ample, rounded, black, 3 or 4 outer feathers tipped white. Sides rufous, belly white. Female similar, with the black replaced by grayish or fuscous-brown. Length about 8 inches.

A BLACK AND-WHITE WARBLER?

An unsigned slip of paper reached me today, bearing the words "Dear Agricola, Do Black and White Warblers have any yellow about them—a dot on their head and splashes on their wings? One-trying-to-learn about birds." From the post-mark I can make a shrewd guess at the writer!

No, the Black-and-White Warbler has the two colors, and no more. What you have seen is the Myrtle Warbler, which is one of the commoner sorts. I can scarcely improve on your description. In spring this Warbler has a yellow patch on the crown, one on the front of each wing, and one where the tail joins the body; there are black markings on the breast. In the fall the young birds join the flock and are rather different in plumage, but I hope to describe all stages in due course. The Magnolia Warbler, another Islander, resembles the Myrtle to some extent, but has no yellow on the crown. The Black and White Warbler is here too and is mentioned in Bain's "Birds of P. E. I. (1891)."

A TRUE BUG

Last week I had three little visitors to whom I am indebted for a glance at a true bug which they had found. We call a great many insects bugs whereas they are only beetles! The real bugs have their legs crossed on their backs. The beetles have wing-cases and wings parallel, side by side and not crossed.

One should always date natural history specimens. Some museums will not take bugs (or anything else) unless labelled with the day, month, year and place, when and where they were found. This bug, then, was found May 6, 1950, at Brackley Beach. Since it was in a bottle I had no opportunity of measuring

manufacture less carbohydrates vital to flower-bud formation; control of insects and disease which have the same effect as shading through destruction of foliage; a constant soil moisture supply which is more important under prairie conditions - destruction of weeds, good soil conditions irrigation.

Even with the foregoing practices, trees occasionally fail to blossom. It may be possible then to force flower-bud formation by judicious application of nitrogenous fertilizers alone or in association with proper pruning.

it, but I estimated it at 3.5 inches long, so it well deserves its name of "Giant Water Bug". It was certainly the biggest I've yet seen.

This creature is long-oval in shape flat and of a dark liver-color. It has two sharply-hooked forelegs up to its head and two pairs of swimming legs "amidships". It feeds on insects, fish, snails, and other aquatic animals, which it holds by its hooked forelegs. It then plunges its sharp beak into the victim and injects a liquid that has a stupefying effect, prior to consuming its prey.

The scientists have called this bug *Lethocerus americanus*. There are both Water Bugs and Water Beetles on the Island, and both are easy to keep in a large jar of water. The water must be changed when it gets too foul, and the creature must be fed. Pond water is better than well water for this purpose. The jar must not be placed in strong sunshine or the heat will be too much for the bug. Since the bug can fly as well as swim the jar must have a loose cover to prevent its escape.

A WALRUS TUSK

A neighbor has just brought, in what I supposed, at first glance, to be a fossil. It had some resemblance to a horn, but weighed 3 lbs 2 oz and was 15 inches long. If it is a horn then it must have been a very strong animal that carried it (and perhaps another) around all day! It tapers to a rounded point, but at the point of attachment it is 8 inches around. It is not round like a cow's horn, but considerably flattened at the sides. The outer enamel is longitudinally grooved, giving the object a "built-up" appearance. The whole object has a gentle curve from base to point, and in color it is a sort of white. My neighbor could give no information save that it had been in the barn loft ever since he could remember. Is it a sea-cow's tusk? I hope some reader is able to enlighten me.

BURNABY'S RIDE TO KHIVA

We left Colonel Burnaby in St. Petersburg, (now Leningrad) dining with a Russian general, and listening to a dire prophecy, since fulfilled. (This was in 1875, and Tzar Alexander II was the Ruler of Russia). Burnaby could speak and read Russian, and he turned the conversation to the recognized ability of the Russian themselves as linguists. There is he tells us, no doubt, an opinion in England that the Russians are good linguists because their own tongue is so difficult that all others become easy to them afterwards! This, he found, was a fallacy. "The true reason why some Russian speak two or three languages well and with perfect pronunciation, is simply the attention that is paid to the subject, especially in the capital (St. Petersburg). There is he tells us, no doubt, an opinion in England that the Russians are good linguists because their own tongue is so difficult that all others become easy to them afterwards! This, he found, was a fallacy. 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