

\$500 More a Year Farming: How to Get It

By Making the Right Kind of a Seed Bed Before Planting.

By Tait Butler.

PERHAPS no where else is so little attention given to the preparation of the seed bed as in the South. This is probably due to the fact that our crops are largely those which are planted in rows or drills and that we have used much hand labor in their cultivation. Under such conditions the second of the two chief reasons for a thorough preparation of the seed bed stated in the next sentence is made less imperative. These two most important benefits from a well prepared seed bed are, (1) a better stand of more vigorous growing plants and (2) a reduction in the cost of cultivation after the crops come up.

Good Seed Bed Means Cheaper Cultivation and a Better Stand.

This latter applies more particularly when the harrow and the weeder are used for early cultivation instead of the hoe, as has been largely the custom in the South. In fact, a thorough preparation of the land before planting is absolutely essential if the most economical cultivation with the harrow, weeder and cultivator is to be practiced, instead of that most expensive of all tools for cultivating a crop, the hoe.

A thorough preparation of the soil before planting secures a better stand and the crop grows off more rapidly. Some of the reasons why this occurs are that all clods are broken, allowing the air and water to act upon the soil particles, setting free more plant foods; and permitting the roots of the plants to penetrate all parts of the soil and take up these plant foods. The finer soil particles settle more closely around the seeds, causing them to germinate more promptly and grow off more vigorously. When rains fall more water is absorbed by the soil and in subsequent dry weather less is lost by evaporation.

First Of All, Thorough Breaking, Good and Deep.

The first step in the proper preparation of the seed bed is a thorough breaking or plowing of the land. The subject of plowing has been thoroughly discussed in this series of articles, and at this time suffice it to state that a good seed bed, in the full meaning of that term, is only possible on a well-broken deep soil.

The question of when the breaking should be done has also been thoroughly discussed, but there is one condition we must insist on as essential to the preparation of a good seed bed: the breaking must be done long enough before planting to allow a proper settling and compacting of the soil. As a general rule we believe planting should not be done sooner than two weeks after breaking and preferably not until a good rain has fallen on the freshly plowed land. The soil must be properly firmed or settled, either by rain or the use of suitable implements.

All Land Broken at Planting Should Be Harrowed Same Day.

After the land has been broken the work of preparing the seed bed consists in compacting and pulverizing the soil. When considerable time has elapsed since the plowing was done the work is reduced simply to a thorough firming of the upper two or three inches of soil. If, however,

the plowing is done in the spring, shortly before or at the time of planting, certain measures become necessary to prevent the formation of hard clods and too great loss of moisture. When the breaking is deferred until planting time the land is apt to be too moist and compact for pulverization with the plow and unless harrowed before the soil dries

helps to crush clods but also compacts the soil. In wet seasons this is not of importance, but when the weather is dry it is essential that recently plowed land be compacted, or the loss of moisture is likely to be so great that there is not sufficient left to germinate the seeds. Not only do the widely separated soil particles in a very loose soil dry out too much, but they do not fit closely to the seeds and even the moisture left in the soil is of no avail.

Humus Keeps the Land Open and Porous.

How much work with the disc and smoothing harrows will be required to put the land in proper condition for planting depends on the condi-

tion of the soil. If the soil is full of humus, or of a sandy nature, a small amount of work will be required even though the breaking may have been done months before; but if it be heavy land and deficient in humus, several discings and harrowings may be necessary to put the land in condition. Because of the large amount of work sometimes necessary to prepare a good seed bed on land broken in the fall, some object to breaking until shortly before planting. Others claim that it pays to plow in the fall even though the land may "run together" so as to necessitate a second plowing in the spring. Such lands should have some growing cover crops during the winter. More humus will greatly lessen their tendency to "run together."

No matter how much work is required with the disc harrow, the smoothing harrow and the clod crusher or roller, it is folly to plant any crop until the soil is firm and thoroughly pulverized. Not only is a better stand assured, which is essential to a good crop; but the subsequent cultivation required will be less and may be done with more economical implements. The land can be more cheaply cultivated before the plants are up and in the way of (Continued on Page 170.)

TWELVE THINGS TO DO IN, MARCH

1. See that the seed bed for all crops is not merely well broken but thoroughly pulverized by harrowing and disking. An ounce of preparation may be worth a pound of cultivation.
2. Get ready with weeders and harrows to kill the grass before it comes up. Don't be afraid of hurting the stand. This will not happen.
3. Place orders for all improved plows, harrows, weeders, cultivators, and other labor-saving tools and machinery. Get ready to make your crop with cheap horse labor instead of expensive hand labor.
4. Don't waste time and sweat on scrub seed or scrub stock this year. Improved varieties will pay as well with field crops as with garden crops.
5. Get ready to share with the Western farmer his golden flood of profits in raising hogs and cattle. First of all get an improved breed, and then arrange to feed economically. With proper pasture crops both pork and beef can be made more cheaply in the South than in the West.
6. Of the over \$50,000,000 spent in the South for fertilizers each year at least \$10,000,000 is wasted through ignorance of crop needs and soil needs. Try to stop your part of this colossal loss.
7. Join in the great corn-raising revival now sweeping over the South. The biggest corn crops the world has known have been made in the South, and we are just waking up to the fact that Dixie can beat the Corn Belt itself raising this king of cereals.
8. Don't forget the garden, and don't make your wife do all the work in it. Remember, vegetables are cheaper than meat and more healthful.
9. We cannot have good fruit now without spraying. A good spray pump will often pay for itself the first year, in the orchard and potato patch.
10. Drag the roads after every rain. The split-log drag is the cheapest good roads maker ever invented.
11. Paint the farm house and whitewash the outbuildings that you do not care to paint. It will pay you simply in your increased sense of pride and dignity.
12. Get your boy to join the Boys' Corn Club movement with an acre of corn, and give your girl a flock of pure bred chickens. And be sure to let each one have the money he or she makes from this allotment.

out too much hard clods form, which are difficult to pulverize. For this reason, all land broken at planting time should be harrowed the same day. If this harrowing is done at just the right time, when the soil is just dry enough but not too dry, it will pulverize easily.

For this reason it is usually best to stop plowing long enough before noon and night to harrow the land plowed during the preceding part of the day.

The Implements That Are Needed.

For fall and winter plowed land the disc harrow first and the smoothing harrow afterward, are the implements most useful for preparing the seed bed. On spring plowed land or land plowed at planting time an additional implement may be necessary for breaking the clods and this is especially likely to be true if the harrow is not used promptly after breaking. Either a plank drag or clod crusher, or a roller is best for this purpose.

The roller is especially valuable when the breaking has been delayed until planting time, for it not only



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