

COMMERCIAL FERTILIZERS.

How Far They are Profitable to Farmers—A Good Article on an Important Subject.

(From the Southern Cultivator.)

It is quite common to hear complaints of the worthlessness of a large proportion of the commercial fertilizers sold to farmers. That some of these complaints are well founded there is little doubt.

The average farmer judges of the merit or quality of a fertilizer by the effects of the same on the crop to which it was applied. And, this is the only way he can safely determine whether a fertilizer has returned a fair percentage on the investment. But how often is it true that the crop grows off nicely and everything appears to promise a good yield, and at last some casualty of drought, or wet or frost, cuts off the crop.

On the other hand, if the plant starts off well and the seasons and other conditions continue auspicious to the end of the harvest, and the farmer gathers a large crop, he is apt to be pleased with the fertilizer he used, as well as everything that was connected with the crop.

One very important precaution is overlooked by a large majority of farmers who use commercial fertilizers, viz: the test of the scales. It is unreasonable to insist that a fertilizer has "done the crop no good" when no test or experiment has been set apart, the fertilizer carefully weighed and distributed, and the yield on the crop gathered and weighed under the very eye of the proprietor.

Now, what is a fair profit on the investment in a fertilizer? A farmer ought to be well content to realize 8 or 10 per cent. per annum profit on all the fixed and working capital employed in his business after allowing a reasonable sum for his services and for wear and tear, insurance, etc.

One ton of standard fertilizers, hauled and distributed in the soil, costs, say thirty (\$30) dollars cash. The money is paid—say April 1st—and the crop is harvested and ready for market—say October 1st—six months. Suppose the increased yield of cotton, after deducting the extra expenses of picking and ginning, and adding the value of the extra seed, is thirty-five dollars, or five dollars clear profit. Five dollars net increase in the value of the crop due to the use of a ton of fertilizer would not be considered unusual; it is probably much below the average results.

No reasonable man will be likely to deny the fairness of the above figures. The per cent. increase credited to the fertilizer is probably less than the average results of the use of commercial fertilizers in general—good, bad and indifferent—for a series of years together, say for the last ten years. It is true that they are not so great as for the preceding period of ten years, or, in other words, that commercial fertilizers do not yield as good results on the same fields as they did ten or fifteen years ago.

What, then, is the difficulty? Do those farmers who refrain from the use of commercial fertilizers succeed any better? If they do, is their prosperity due to their policy in this respect, or is it not in spite of it, and because of exceptional skill, industry, economy—especially in the utilizing of manure and resources? When the latter policy is supplemented by the judicious (and liberal) use of the best grades of commercial fertilizing materials, composted or mixed—as far as possible—at home, we almost invariably see the best results.

HOUSE PLANTS AND SPRING.

Instructions for Repotting and Caring for Plants at this Season.

(From the London Queen.)

Where plants have been wintered in the dwelling houses they will need careful attention during the month of March. When the weather is sufficient to mild the plants should be taken from their winter quarters and any dust that may have accumulated on the foliage should be washed off with sponge and water, and every dead or decaying leaf should be removed.

Now is the time to make preparations for spring potting, a very necessary operation. The plants to be shifted, or repotted, should be watered thoroughly two days previous to the day the operation is to be performed, so that the soil may be in a proper state, neither too dry and the fresh compost used should be in a similar or better condition.

The favorite color for this spring will be gray in all shades, from the darkest steel gray to a delicate silvery tone. Black silk dresses are becoming popular, owing to the introduction of a new silk fabric known as pean de sole, and which is to wear well.

Evening dresses which are now worn with care are very trimming, and consist of ribbons, tulle, and lace. Black or bronze kid slippers are worn with dark dresses for demi-toilette. The slipper is now cut very low over the instep, the stocking being embroidered with silk or open worked in a fine lace like pattern.

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STYLES IN PARIS.

Returning to Simpler Forms—Gray the Favorite Color—Other Hints.

A cable dispatch to the New York Herald says: "The fashions for the present spring promise to return to great simplicity of form. For ladies' dresses the elaborate loopings and draperies of bygone seasons have given place to flat, straight folds, to trimmings of embroideries and braiding, and to slight drapery at the back of the skirt.

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KAISER WILHELM.

How the German People Celebrated His Ninetieth Birthday—Billiant Pageantry and Imposung Ceremonies.

Berlin, March 22.—The ninetieth anniversary of Emperor William's birth was observed in all the churches and the towers of the town hall, and the sounding of choral hymns. The city is decorated as it never was before.

The students' procession past the palace was a grand affair. They went in carriages, of which there were several hundred in line, carried bright banners of the various schools and college societies and associations, and were accompanied by many bands playing music and arranged in gorgeous medieval costumes.

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THE SORROWS OF GRAVE-DIGGERS.

They All Die Poor—Their Woes Told by One of the Craft.

(From the New York Star.)

Burying the dead in Calvary cemetery has come to be a disagreeable job to the union of grave-diggers, but as the walking delegate appeared in the cemetery yesterday, the grave-diggers were kept busy all day with pick and shovel, digging new graves.

Grave-digging is about as hard and unwholesome an occupation as there is. Suppose that the average term of life of a grave-digger is much less than that of most other workmen. We don't go off as quickly as they do in a powder mill, but we go fast enough.

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THE INTER-STATE COMMISSION.

The Men Appointed by the President to Regulate the Railroads.

(From the New York Star.)

The following is a sketch of the public careers of the men composing the commission, excepting Morrison, whose public services are so generally known as to need no description:

THOMAS M. COOLEY was born at Allen, N. Y., in 1824, Michigan in 1833, where he has since resided. In 1857 he was elected compiler of the State laws and in 1858 reporter for the Supreme Court. In 1859 he was chosen by the regents as commissioner to organize the law department of the University of Michigan, and he has ever since been connected with it.

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THE PRESIDENTIAL BOOM.

Blaine and Sherman Contending for the Republican Nomination.

(Letter to the Cincinnati Enquirer.)

The play for the Presidential position has begun early. Sherman will soon be in the South making speeches, more with a view to make an impression in his own political circles than to advance views calculated to aid the development of the section he visits.

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