

About Alfalfa.

The month of March in most portions of this State, all things considered, is the best time to sow alfalfa seed. If sown in the fall, so as to come up after the first rains, and the winter is favorable, with but little frost, an advantage for the next summer will be secured in one particular—a greater growth. But this advantage will, under most favorable circumstances, be counteracted to a certain extent by the more vigorous growth of a larger quantity and greater variety of weeds. Those who sowed their seed last fall may many of them find it to their advantage to resow now. We have not personally examined any fields sown last fall, but from the fact that we had in December and January a long spell of frosty nights and cold weather, we conclude that a great many of the small plants are killed out, and if so, weeds have doubtless filled their places. If the stand of clover is too thin, and weeds are thick and luxuriant, the best plan is to reseed; but if there is half a stand, and the surface of the soil is not too hard and too weedy, then the better plan will be to sow directly on the present surface, and board it in with a heavy board. While this mode of covering will generally cover the seed deep enough, it will not do much injury to the stand already set, but, on the contrary, will be a benefit to it by pulverizing the surface of the soil. Alfalfa sown in this month generally escapes serious injury from frost, and, coming on rapidly, gets the start of weeds, and, consequently, makes a better stand than that planted in the fall or later in the spring.

MOW EARLY.

Some recommend pasturing alfalfa the first year to make it stool better, but we do not concur in this view, and for this reason. If stock of any kind be turned into a field of young and tender alfalfa they will eat it greedily, cutting it off too close to the ground, while they will not interfere with the weeds with which it is struggling for the ascendancy. This gives the weeds the start of the young plants, and between the stock and the weeds even a good stand of alfalfa will most likely be greatly injured and damaged, if not ruined. The better plan is to mow both weeds and alfalfa as soon as it has a growth of four or five inches. This will secure the same advantage as to stooling, and will at least give the alfalfa an equal show with the weeds. It will, in fact, give it the advantage over the weeds, for the reason that alfalfa will start out quicker after being cut off than most any variety of weeds, and will thus be able to get the start of them, and from the nature of the plant—throwing down a tap root and drawing its nourishment from below where the roots of the weeds penetrate, will keep the advantage thus secured.

CAUTION.

Sometimes the hot sun will wilt and injure the young plants if allowed to fall directly upon the stubble after mowing. To prevent this it is better to allow the weed tops and clover thus cut off to remain as they fall over the blade of the mower. If not too heavy they should not be raked up at all. The shade thus made will gradually grow less as these weeds are dried in the sun, and as the young alfalfa becomes able to bear it without injury. If managed in this way on good soil, two crops of hay may generally be secured the first season. The time to pasture to make the alfalfa stool, is the following spring, when, if the stand is not thick enough, a real advantage in this respect may be secured.

ITS ENEMIES.

The chief enemies to alfalfa are standing water and gophers. The former does its chief injury on the river bottoms, though sometimes is very injurious in low undrained places, even on the up or back lands. The gopher, on the other hand, is most injurious on the table lands not subject to overflow. Standing water, whether on the surface or near it, rots the root of the alfalfa and thus kills it by degrees. Even the sipage-water where the lands are well leaved will frequently do great injury to alfalfa fields, especially if the rivers are high and the sipage takes place late in the season. The gophers gnaw and eat the roots, leaving the top to wilt and die. When the clover has

been thinned out by either cause it is very difficult to bring it up to required thickness by sowing seed on the surface, for the reason that the old plants shade the young ones and kill them out before they are able to cope with the old. Under such circumstances the hay crop of an alfalfa field may be helped very materially by sowing wild oats, or even barley, on the surface, and dragging it in with a heavy harrow. This plan may be followed for a year or two, or until it is best to reseed. The hay produced from this mixture is of the best quality and commands the highest price in the markets.—*Sacramento Record-Union.*

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