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# Memoranda of the Plan and Results of the Rothamsted Field Experiments, May 1866



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## Experiments on the Growth of Root-crops

### Rothamsted Research

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## EXPERIMENTS ON THE GROWTH OF ROOT-CROPS.

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EXPERIMENTS with TURNIPS were commenced in 1843. Eight acres, divided into numerous plots, were set apart for the purpose; and the crop was grown for ten consecutive years on the same land ("Norfolk Whites" 1843-1848 and "Swedes" 1849-1852); on some plots without manure, and on others with different descriptions of manure. Barley was then grown for three consecutive seasons (1853-1855) without manure, in order to test the comparative corn-growing condition of the different plots, and also to equalize their condition, as far as possible, by the exhaustion of some of the most active and immediately available constituents supplied by the previous manuring. A new series of experiments with Swedes was then arranged, having regard to the character of the manures previously applied on the different plots, and to the results previously obtained. This second series was commenced in 1856, and is still in progress.

It is impossible adequately to state the bearing of the results in a few words, but the following are some of the most characteristic indications:—

1. Without manure of any kind, the produce of roots was reduced in a few years to a few cwts. per acre; but the diminutive plants (both root and leaf) contained a very unusually high percentage of nitrogen.

2. Of "mineral" constituents, phosphoric acid (in the form of superphosphate of lime) was by far the most effective manure; but, when this manure is used alone, the immediately available nitrogen of the soil is rapidly exhausted.

3. Really large crops of turnips can only be obtained when the soil supplies a liberal amount of both carbonaceous and nitrogenous matter (as well as mineral constituents); and when they are already available within the soil, or are supplied in the form of farmyard manure, rape-cake, Peruvian guano, ammonia-salts, &c., the rapidity of growth, and the amount of the crop, are greatly increased by the use of superphosphate of lime applied near to the seed.