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Memoranda of the Field Experiments at Rothamsted: May 1881



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Experiments on Beans; Geescroft Field

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EXPERIMENTS ON THE GROWTH OF LEGUMINOUS CROPS.

I.—BEANS, PEAS, AND TARES—GEESCROFT FIELD.

EXPERIMENTS on the growth of Leguminous corn-crops (beans, peas, and tares), with different descriptions of manure, were commenced in 1847, about nine acres being devoted to the purpose.

Experiments with BEANS were continued without a break, for thirteen consecutive seasons, to 1859 inclusive; but, during the later years, the crop fell off very much, and the land became very foul.

In 1860 the land was fallowed.

In 1861 a crop of wheat, without manure, was taken.

In 1862 beans were again sown, but with some variation in the manuring.

In 1863 the land was fallowed.

In 1864, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, beans were grown, with much the same manures on the same plots, each year, as in 1862.

In the winter of 1869-70, 5000 lbs. of fresh burnt lime were applied per acre, over all the plots.

In 1870 beans were grown with the same manures on the respective plots as in 1864-69.

In October 1870 winter beans were sown (without manure), but the plants were to so great an extent destroyed by the severe weather which followed, that, in April 1871, the crop was ploughed up, and the land left fallow.

During the winter and early spring of 1871-2, the land was so wet that it could not be prepared in time for sowing. It was therefore left fallow for 1872; at the end of May it was subsoiled to a depth of about 12 inches, and re-ploughed in July.

The winter and early spring of 1872-3 were also so extremely wet, that it was again impossible to prepare the land in time for sowing; it was, however, ploughed up towards the end of March, again left fallow, and re-ploughed in July and October (1873).

On February 2, 1874, the land was again set with Beans, but without manure.

In 1875 Beans were re-sown, with the same manures on the respective plots as in 1864-1870; but owing to the wetness of the land in the first instance, and the subsequent hindrance by other spring sowing, they were not put in until April 1 and 2.

The wetness of the winter 1875-6, again prevented the preparation of the land in due time; and, though the manures were sown, and the land ploughed, it was left fallow during the summer of 1876.

Early in October, 1876, winter Beans were put in (drilled), without further manuring.

In 1878 the usual manures were sown, and beans were drilled on February 26.

Owing to the wetness of the winter, and the foul condition of the land, it was left fallow in 1879.

Owing to the continued wetness in the autumn, the severe winter, and foulness of the land, it could not be got into order for sowing, and remained fallow in 1880.

During 1880 the land was ploughed, scarified, and partially cleaned, but owing to the wetness of the autumn and the wetness and severity of the winter, it was again impossible to work the land in time for sowing; and it still remains fallow (1881).

The general result of the experiments with BEANS has been that mineral constituents used as manure (more particularly potass), increased the produce very much during the early years; and, to a certain extent, afterwards, whenever the season was favourable for the crop. Ammonia-salts, on the other hand, produced very little effect; notwithstanding that a Leguminous crop contains two, three, or more times as much nitrogen as a Gramineous one grown under similar conditions as to soil, &c. Nitrate of soda has, however, produced more marked effects. But Leguminous crops grown too frequently on the same land seem to be peculiarly subject to disease, which no conditions of manuring that we have hitherto tried seem to obviate.

Experiments with PEAS were soon abandoned, owing to the difficulty of keeping the land free from weeds, and an alternation

of BEANS and WHEAT was substituted; the Beans being manured much as in the experiments with the same crop grown continuously as above described. But the wetness of the winter of 1871-72 prevented the sowing of the Beans for the season of 1872; and again the wetness of the autumn and winter of 1872-3 prevented the sowing of the wheat until April 4, 1873, when Nursery wheat was put in, which, however, did not come to maturity, but was cut in the middle of September, yielding about 27 cwts. of gross produce per acre, containing too little corn to be worth thrashing. The land was ploughed in October 1873, and sown with beans February 3, 1874. On October 23, 1874, wheat was sown without manure. Beans should have been sown in 1876; indeed, the manures were sown, but, for the reason stated above, the land was left fallow; and wheat was put in October 24 (1876). In 1878 Beans were drilled, on February 26, with the usual manures. Owing to the wetness of the winter, and the condition of the land, it was left fallow in 1879; and it continues so up to the present time (May 1881).

In alternating WHEAT with BEANS, the remarkable result had been obtained, that nearly as much wheat, and nearly as much nitrogen, were yielded in eight crops of wheat in alternation with the highly nitrogenous beans, as in sixteen crops of wheat grown consecutively without manure in another field, and also nearly as much as were obtained in a third field in eight crops alternated with bare fallow.

Experiments with TARES, like those with Peas, were soon abandoned, and for the same reasons. Beans were at first substituted, with some variation in the description of the manures employed; but this experiment has likewise been abandoned for some years.

II.—RED CLOVER (*Trifolium pratense*).1. *Experiments on ordinary arable land.*—HOOS FIELD.

EXPERIMENTS on the growth of Clover, on ordinary arable land, with many different descriptions of manure, were commenced in 1849, and, with the occasional interposition of a corn-crop, or fallow, were continued up to 1877, inclusive.

As with other Leguminous crops, the result was, that mineral constituents applied as manure (particularly potass) considerably increased the early crops. Ammonia-salts had little or no beneficial effect, and were sometimes injurious. It may be added, that the beneficial effects of long previous applications of potass have been apparent whenever there was any growth at all. To go a little more into detail:—

In the first year, 1849, the crops were throughout very heavy; especially with mineral, and without nitrogenous manure.

In autumn 1849 wheat was sown, and in spring 1850 Red Clover. In 1851 small cuttings were taken; and in 1852, though the crops were not heavy, there was by no means a failure.

Since that time, however, all attempts to grow clover year after year on this ordinary arable land have failed to give anything like a full crop, or even a plant which would stand the usual time on the ground.

Small cuttings were obtained in the autumns of 1855 and 1859, from seed sown in the spring of those years; and small but rather heavier cuttings in June and August 1865, from seed sown in 1864.

In April 1868 a portion only of the land was sown with Clover, and the plant for the most part died off in the winter.

In April 1869 the same portion was resown, and gave a small cutting in September of that year; but the plant again died off in the winter.

In April 1870 Clover was sown over the whole of the experimental land, this time in conjunction with Barley; but on those portions which had also been sown in 1868 and 1869 the plant again died off during the winter and early spring; whilst from those which had not been sown in 1868 and 1869 two small cuttings were taken in 1871.