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WISCONSIN BANKERS' FARM BULLETIN

Kill The Weeds

By

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Number Seeds Borne by Weeds		
Snapdragon	16,000	
Ragweed	19,000	
Yellow Foxtail	63,000	
Curled Dock	144,000	
Barnyard Grass	980,000	
Lamb's-quarter	608,000	
Black Seed Plantain	162,000	
Tumbleweed	6,150,850	

WEEDS MEAN WASTE

Can you afford it this year? Note the number of seeds produced by a single weed plant. (The large seeds are magnified; the small ones represent actual sizes.)

File this bulletin where you can find it

Distributed by

Wisconsin Bankers' Association

G. W. Dudley
Chairman Agricultural Committee,
West Salem

George D. Bartlett,
Association Secretary,
Pabst Building, Milwaukee

Weeds Cut Down Yields

In these days when the world faces a serious food shortage, it is necessary for each one of us to raise just as much human and animal food as is possible.

This year above all years weeds should not be allowed to take plant food and moisture from a crop or compete with it for air and sunshine. Every weed kept from going to seed makes room for the growth of a crop plant. Keep the weeds from seeding.

"Kill the weeds" is a slogan which is being adopted on more and more Wisconsin farms. Of course, on some of our farms weeds have taken possession of the fields; on others they fight with the crops for existence; and on others the crops have things much to themselves.

Weeds have fought for existence for centuries and are more hardy than crops. Left to themselves the weeds win and the crops are either killed or suffer heavy loss. We cannot do our best in answering the loud call for food if the weeds become so thick they crowd out, smother, or even compete with our crops. There are some weeds, of course, which spread by their underground parts, but if no weeds were ever allowed to seed, the spread would be much slower and the injury to crops much less.

WEEDS SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO SEED.

1. Because they reduce crop yields, by using moisture and plant food which crops should have. Most weeds use more moisture than do crops because they grow larger and have greater leaf surface. They stand draught better and in dry seasons may entirely kill the crop.

2. Because they shade, crowd, and dwarf grain crops. They help to keep alive many plant diseases and ailments. In a weedy field, the plants stay wet longer in the morning and rusts and smuts have a better chance to grow. They also suck life from crop plants, as in the case of dodder on clover, and broom rape on hemp.

3. Because they increase the cost of harvesting, by causing extra wear and tear on teams and machinery. By twining about the corn and grain, choking the binder, causing bundles to stick together, and making shocking difficult, weeds make themselves very troublesome and costly.

4. Because they lower the selling prices of farm products. Weeds cause dockage on the grain market, injure hay, give offensive flavors to dairy products where cattle are pastured in fields infested with weeds with strong odors, and injure wool and furs.

5. Because they reduce the net profit on the farm by poisoning live stock (poisonous weeds are numerous), by requiring payment of taxes for weed control, and by requiring an immense amount of labor to help in their control.

6. Because they lower the selling price of farms. No farmer will pay the best price for weed-infested land.

KEEP WEEDS FROM SEEDING.

Annuals—plants which live but one year. Weeds of this class reproduce themselves by seeds only and it is important to keep them from going to seed. Any method which will accomplish this will eventually eradicate them. Ragweed, foxtails or pigeon grasses, wild mustard, Russian thistle, red root, and corn cockle are examples. They are found in cultivated fields, in yards, along fences, and in grain fields after harvest.

Biennials—plants which live two years, producing only leaves and roots the first year and a flower stalk and seeds the second. Like annuals, they can be killed by preventing seeding. Usually they are found growing in meadows, pastures, and out-of-the-way places, and, on the whole, are easily controlled. Burdock, wild lettuce, bull thistle, mullen, cheat, wild parsnip, and wild carrot are prominent examples.

Perennials—plants, the roots of which live for more than two, often many, years. Stalks come up from the root and seed are often produced each year. There are some perennials which never produce seed and spread only by the roots or portions of the roots. Though it is important to prevent perennials from seeding, they cannot be eradicated by preventing seed bearing only. It is necessary to kill the underground parts. Quack grass, Canada thistles, wild morning glory, ox-eye daisy, snapdragon or butter-and-eggs, common milkweed, and perennial sow thistle are our worst perennials.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WEEDS SEED.

Annuals which escape the cultivator in crops like corn, potatoes, and sugar beets, usually grow into splendid specimens of their kind. Such plants bear an almost unbelievable number of seeds. These amazing figures are found by actual count: ragweed, 19,000; pigeon grass, 142,660; wild mustard, 143,000; lamb's-quarter, 608,300; barnyard grass, 1,292,700; and tumbleweed, 6,150,850 seeds to the plant. Their seeds will also lie buried in the soil unharmed for years! Only a very few weed seeds will decay in less than three years. Seeds of wild mustard, common ragweed, and penny-cress which have been buried for ten years or more will germinate and grow when brought to the warmth and light by plowing or cultivation. Seeds of sweet clover which have been buried 44 years and Indian mallow buried for 56 years, have been known to sprout and produce plants when turned to the surface.



WILD OATS SEEDING ALONG THE ROADSIDE

Cut the weeds in out-of-the-way corners, along the roadside and along the fences. The seed is blown about by the wind and often lands where it will do the most harm.

Biennials resemble annuals in the above respects but bear fewer seeds to the plant. Examples are roadside thistle, 15,196; burdock, 47,883; wild lettuce, 242,925; and mullen, 1,249,040. They depend wholly upon seeds

for reproduction; therefore, the importance of killing them before seeding is plain.

Perennials bear less seed to the plant than either annuals or biennials. While it is necessary to kill the roots to eradicate the plants, and while some of them, like Canada thistle, perennial sow thistle, wild morning glory, quack grass and others spread by their underground parts, it is also necessary to keep them from bearing seeds. This is shown by the fact that the common milkweed bears 10,302; dandelion, 14,079; snapdragon, 16,966; common plantain, 59,400; buckhorn, 117,700; yellow dock, 143,500; and yarrow, 577,600 seeds to each well-developed plant!

PREVENT WEEDS FROM SEEDING.

By rotating the crops—For the dairy farmer, the following rotation is a good one: first year, corn in which no weeds go to seed; second year, oats or barley, seeding at the same time to clover and timothy using 8 pounds of red clover and 6 pounds of timothy seed to the acre; third year, two crops of clover hay or one crop of hay and one of seed; fourth year, a crop of timothy hay or pasture. In the fall of the fourth year, manure the sod and plow ready for corn the next spring. If the corn is kept clean this rotation will keep annuals from going to seed.

By carefully plowing, cultivating and harrowing fields before seeding. By the time the soil is ready to work in the spring, millions of young seed plants have begun to grow. Careful cultivation with a disk or spring-tooth harrow will kill them. The cultivation, however, brings more weed seeds up, and, if the weather is warm, in 24 hours another crop will have started. A weed killed at this time means one weed less in the grain or corn crop. At no time in their lives can weeds be killed more easily than when they first begin to grow. A little more time and labor than farmers usually give to the preparation of the seed bed will pay good dividends in the crop.

By using weeder, spike-tooth harrow and cultivator freely in all cultivated crops such as corn and potatoes. The weeder and harrow will do little harm to the crop if used in the afternoon after the plants have wilted. In the morning, when the plants are fresh, they break off easily and some damage will be done.

Don't wait too long before cultivating, cutting, or digging. Many weeds are very deceiving in appearance, and while seeming to be perfectly green and still in bloom, will be found to have ripened their seed. Red root, lamb's-quarter, chickweed, pusley, and pigeon grasses are good examples of such weeds. There are many others having the same habit, so begin early and let none of them get to the seeding stage.