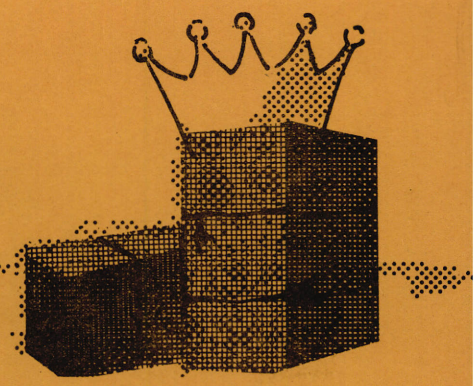
Forage Queen



September 21, 1973

* What Shall I Plant in '74?
* Select a Variety...
* Fall vs. Spring Planting
* Fall Alfalfa Meetings - October 24 and 25

WHAT SHALL I PLANT IN '74?

The future's market of cotton for 1974 is affecting decisions on what crops to plant in Fresno County in the next few months. The publication entitled "What Shall I Plant in '74?" is enclosed for your potential use. This is intended as a guide using the range of yields and prices which seem to be current as of this date.

Individual cost data work sheets are available for these crops at this office. Please read the criteria printed on the enclosed work sheets before attempting to use the tables listed for examples. (Continued on page 3)

SELECT A VARIETY WITH BEST CHARACTERISTICS FOR YOUR SOIL

(adapted from remarks by Vern Marble, Extension Agronomist, U. C. Davis, at the California Alfalfa Symposium 1972)

Important alfalfa variety factors will vary from area to area and according to individual grower's use, but should include: correct winter dormancy for area, moderate to long stand life, an adequate yield, the ability to produce adequate quality, and resistance to the major diseases and insect pests.

Winter dormancy. Alfalfa varieties grown in California may be divided into three rather broad groups: (1) those which are non-winter dormant, capable of slow growth during the winter months in central and southern California; (2) those intermediate in winter dormancy, which normally produce very little winter growth when cut after mid-October; (3) those which are very winter dormant and which can withstand cold temperatures experienced in the high elevation mountain areas of northern California.

This broad classification is increasingly difficult to maintain since there are variations in winter dormancy within all three groups. I prefer to classify alfalfas grown in California into four groups with the addition of a "very non-dormant group" which has more growth in the winter months in the southern San Joaquin Valley and the low desert valleys of southern California permitting grazing, green chopping and dehydration. A listing of all known public and private alfalfa varieties and brands sold in California (except only public varieties in the winter dormant class) follows:

1720 S. Maple Street, Fresno, California 93702 Telephone 488-3000

Co-operative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture, University of California, and Fresno County Co-operating

Alfalfa Varieties and Brands Grown in California

Very Non-Dormant	Non-Dormant	Semi-Dormant	Dormant
Abunda Verde Brand	AS-13*	AS-49	Grimm
Caliente	DeKalb Brand 183	Caliverde 65	Ladak
Converde 94 Brand	DeKalb Brand 185	Cody	Narragansett
El Unico	El Camino Brand	Condura 72 Brand	Rambler
Hayden	8-19 Brand Alfalfa	DeKalb Brand 167	Ranger
Mesa Sirsa	El Camino Brand WL 450*	Eureka Brand	Rhizoma
Niagara N-71 Brand	El Camino Brand WL 451*	Kanza	Vernal
Sonora	El Camino Brand WL 508	Lahontan	
Sonora 70	Germain's Eldorado*	Mesilla**	And many other
U. C. Salton	Germain's Eldorado R	Niagara N-78 Brand**	public and private
Imperial 70 Brand	Joaquin 11	10-19 Brand	varieties
El Camino Brand WL 600	Moapa	Washoe	
	Moapa 69		
	919 Brand*		
	U. C. SW-44		

* Known to be only slightly more winter dormant than Moapa.
** Known to be less dormant than Lahontan, and will produce more fall growth than Lahontan.

In comparison to non-winter dormant varieties such as Moapa, semi-dormant varieties do not begin growth as early in the spring, are slower recovering after cutting and require 2 to 4 days longer intervals between harvests to reach 1/10 bloom, and stop growth earlier in the fall. Variety trials conducted in the Sacramento, San Joaquin and Imperial Valleys over the past 15 years indicate a yield reduction for semi-dormant varieties of 5-15%, 10-20% and 20-30% for the above areas respectively for three-year stands planted on well drained soils and cut on a 28-33 day cutting interval.

FALL VERSUS SPRING PLANTING

Fall planting before November 15th is preferred over late winter planting, January through March, if the previous crop has been removed early enough to allow for adequate seedbed and irrigation system preparation. Advantages include:

1) A 20-30% yield increase in first year.
2) Rapid germination and establishment due to warmer temperatures.
3) Reduced likelihood of soil compaction from working wet soils.
4) Increased vigor and ability to compete with weeds.

Spring plantings are recommended only when a severe winter weed problem exists and chemicals cannot be used for their control. Plantings after March 15th becomes more hazardous with each day.

Seeding with a companion crop is not recommended except where wind and sand may blow out unprotected alfalfa seedlings. In such instances only 10 pounds of oats per acre is suggested.

FALL ALFALFA MEETINGS - October 24 and 25

Alfalfa hay growers in Fresno and adjacent counties may wish to reserve one of these two dates for a daytime meeting concerned with alfalfa hay production timely topics. The first of these meetings will be held in Fresno at the Fresno County Farm Bureau building on October 24. The same topics will be presented the following day, October 25, in Visalia.

Topics for these meetings are:

1. Soil Preparation for Alfalfa Planting (to include soil compaction study results)
   Dr. Don Grimes, Associate Water Scientist,
   Water Science & Engineering, Kearney Field Station

2. Weed Control
   Bill Fischer, Fresno County Farm Advisor

3. Alfalfa Seed Rate and Depth of Planting
   Bill McClellan, Tulare County Farm Advisor

4. Fertilizers - Their Availability and Alfalfa Requirements
   Dr. Roy Rauschkolb, Extension Soils Specialist, U.C. Davis

5. Effects of Wheel Traffic in Alfalfa Hay
   Bob Sheesley, Fresno County Farm Advisor

Please mark your calendars now and plan to attend. These discussions will be geared toward saving money for hay growers.

WHAT SHALL I PLANT IN '74? (Continued)

Potential net income per acre is only one factor to consider in planning your crops program for next year. Certainly you hope to maximize your profits, but you have to produce the crops before you can sell them. The availability of labor during the growing season must be budgeted so that you will have an adequate force of skilled workers at the right time to efficiently produce the crops.

The planting, tilling, weed and pest control, irrigation and harvesting equipment must also be available and budgeted so there will be no unacceptable delays in performing these operations.

Advanced planning is necessary to see that you will have adequate water supplies to meet the peak demands of the various crops you intend to plant.

At this writing we face a probable shortage of some fertilizers for 1974. These supplies should be firmed up for amounts of each fertilizer and the date of availability. Hopefully, there will be a plan in operation by next season to allot fuel for agriculture.

Also serious consideration should be made to the cash flow during the season. This may be a major reason for diversifying crop production. If you go too much into one crop you will need a great deal of money available in a short period of time to meet those needs. You don't need to be reminded that interest rates are high.

Inclusion of short lived perennial crops in your crop program, together with a reasonable diversity of crops can help iron out the peaks and valleys of all of these factors.

Sincerely,

Bob Sheesley

Bob Sheesley
Farm Advisor

Enclosure