NOTES ON THE CONTROL OF WATER WEEDS

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Many of the agricultural experiment stations refer inquiries regarding weeds to the agronomist. Questions concerning the eradication and control of water weeds are particularly difficult to answer, since few agronomists have directed their experience along this line and there is little available literature on the subject.

The growth of weeds in ponds, lakes, ditches, canals and navigable streams frequently becomes a serious problem. Aside from marring the beauty of the surroundings, water weeds may seriously interfere with the water flow and may even close up canals and ditches.

For controlling water weeds, a number of fairly satisfactory methods are available. Where the water is sufficiently shallow, the simplest procedure is to cut with a sharp hand knife, sickle or scythe, severing the plants as close to the bottom as practicable. Where the water is deep and the area large, the use of the submarine saw, a thin, ribbon-like, flexible saw, has been very satisfactory in a number of instances. The instrument is weighted in such a manner that it severs the plants close to the bottom. It is operated by two men, one on each bank.

For small areas, the use of a sharp scythe blade, saw or similar device attached to the end of a row boat or launch with ropes, chains or wire and dragged near the bottom at an angle of about thirty degrees, may be found satisfactory, although it is sometimes difficult to keep the edge sharp when the bottom is stony. The cut weeds usually rise and float away. A weed cutting steam launch, formerly used in the parks of Toronto, Canada, utilized this principle in a very satisfactory manner.

Dragging water weeds with a heavy chain is a rather slow, cumbersome process that is apt to be unsatisfactory. This method has been tried on irrigation ditches in the west. Here one of the most important problems is to keep the banks clean, and excellent results have been secured by fencing in the area and grazing with sheep. This method has been successfully used on the University of Idaho substation farms at Aberdeen and Caldwell and has been tested and found to be satisfactory by the United States Reclamation Service.

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