THE YIELD OF VARIOUS PASTURE PLANTS AT DIFFERENT PERIODS WHEN HARVESTED AS PASTURAGE AND AS HAY

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The object of this experiment, which was started in 1921, was to determine the comparative value of certain pasture plants. The experiment was conducted on 1/160 acre plats. One-half of each plat was harvested as hay and the other half harvested with a lawn mower as growth demanded. The soil on which this experiment was conducted was a Hagerstown very fine sandy loam.

RESULTS

THE YIELD OF PASTURE PLANTS

The air-dried weights of pasturage were secured and the average yields for the three years of 1922 to 1924 are presented in Table 2. Orchard grass stands out as an excellent pasture grass in point of yield when it is compared with the yields of mixtures and of other pure grasses. However, there is frequently much criticism against the use of orchard grass in pastures. It has a bunching habit of growth which gives the pasture an unkept appearance and it is apparently not as palatable as some other grasses. In spite of these objections orchard grass has many things in its favor. It gives a high yield of pasturage, will grow on thinner land than many other grasses, makes a good early spring and late fall growth, and does well during the hot, dry periods of the summer.

Although Kentucky bluegrass gave a lower yield than orchard grass, it is without a doubt the best all-round pasture plant for the rich soils of western Virginia. However, several years are required to obtain a good sod and for this reason it is usually seeded in mixtures. In this test Kentucky bluegrass and Canada bluegrass yielded the same amount of pasturage. Chemical analyses show that the former has a higher feeding value than the latter. Kentucky bluegrass gives a higher yield of dry matter on rich soil, but Canada bluegrass gives a higher yield on poor soil.

Perennial rye grass yielded less than Italian rye grass. The rye grasses are valuable for one year only but they usually persist for two years. Under favorable conditions perennial rye grass persists for several years, but the yield after the first year is usually small. These grasses will grow under almost any condition so long as a fair amount of water is available.

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