IT IS desirable, in eastern Washington, to delay alfalfa hay harvest to escape unfavorable curing conditions. Normal delay of harvest after the first week of June results in alfalfa of poor quality because of over maturity. Cutting the alfalfa in early to mid-May permits delay of maturity into late June when weather conditions favor normal hay-curing operations. The detrimental effect of such early cutting on hay yield and stand maintenance were unknown at the time this experiment was initiated. Jackobs, working in the central Washington irrigated area, reported no loss of stand and only slight reduction in yield by an early spring cutting at the 4-inch height. This observation was in contrast to work done in other alfalfa growing areas of the United States.

Ten varieties of alfalfa were grown in a randomized plot arrangement of four replications. Each main plot was divided into two subplots. One cut at the normal maturity of alfalfa, the other was early cut at the 8-inch height stage (and discarded) and the second cutting made at the hay stage. These harvests were made in 1949 and 1950 (only one cutting is obtained from alfalfa in this area.) The third year (1951) all plots were cut June 13, to measure the residual effect of the early cutting treatment made the previous two years. Table 1 shows the results of that harvest. The yields of the early cut plots averaged only 83.5% that