BOOK REVIEWS

COMMON CULTIVATED CROPS OF SOUTH INDIA

Making use of his rich experience gained in over 30 years as an executive officer in the Madras Department of Agriculture and as Professor of Agriculture in the Agricultural Colleges at Coimbatore and Bapatha, the author has produced a book which contains a wealth of information about the principal food, fodder, and commercial crops of South India.

Beginning with a general discussion of the soils and climate of South India, succeeding introductory chapters deal with soil fertility, tillage, irrigation and crop classification. The main body of the book deals with an interesting and detailed description of the practices followed in the growing, harvesting, storing, and utilizing of various crops. Nine pulses; oil seed crops; seven miscellaneous food crops, including banana, tapioca, sweet potato, white potato, elephant-foot yam, colocasia, and yams; sugar cane; seven condiments and spices; four fiber crops; two narcotics; several green manuring crops; and crops used especially for pasture and forage.

The Madras and Andhra States, comprising South India, represent seven distinct climatic zones each of which has its own pattern of cropping. For instance, the author describes ten different methods of growing rice and four ways to prepare the land for sowing sorghum.

Plowing is done in most areas by use of the wooden country plow drawn by bullocks, and often in preparing for a crop the land is plowed three or four times and sometimes more depending upon the previous crop and the moisture content of the soil. Seeds of most crops are sown thickly and the excess plants removed by hand thinning. Crops, such as rice and millet, are sometimes started in a thickly seeded, specially prepared nursery and seedlings are transplanted to the field.

Crops are often grown in mixtures. For instance, in the uplands of the Godavari District, 30 pounds of rice seed and 3 pounds of cotton seed are mixed and broadcast over each acre in June and at the time this seed is being covered red gram is sown in the same field by drilling the seed in the plow furrows 6 to 8 feet apart. Crops in this mixture are harvested as follows: rice in October, red gram in February, and cotton in successive pickings thereafter.

Practical ways to fertilize the soil are presented. Ways of utilizing commercial fertilizers, green manure crops, and animal manures are recommended. One method of manuring the soil for rice in the Malabar District is to pen about 1,500 sheep per acre in the field for a night.

The volume contains an immense amount of information about field crops, including their history, adaptation, distribution, improvement, and suitability of specific varieties for use in the different crop growing areas of South India. The book is well written with large easy-to-read type and it is fairly well illustrated. It is written so as to be particularly helpful to the extension agriculturist and practical farmer rather than the agricultural scientist. Good as the book is, its value and usefulness would be much extended if it had an index. George H. Dungan.

THE COMPLETE BOOK OF GREENHOUSE GARDENING

This is an excellent book and it is consistent in quality of content and readability which was established in their previous joint effort, "The Soil at a Thumb."