The Farmer's Column.

[*Written for The American Union.*]

HEDGE FENCES:

How to Plant, and how to Manage.

The advantages of this kind of fence over those constructed of rails, poles, plank, &c., need no longer be argued. That the osage orange, under fair circumstances and treatment, in the climate of Maryland, is admirably suited, and that with it farms and fields can be inclosed securely against stock, for the period of ten years, at one half the expense, and twenty years at one-eighth the cost required to enclose the same with either post and rail, pole, or plank fences, is also a fact too plain to be questioned. The frequent rebuilding and repairing necessary to keep in fair condition, such fences as are now commonly used, in this and other parts of Maryland, in the face of a rapid growing scarcity of timber, is a matter claiming the careful consideration of every land owner. Farmers that prudently study their own interests begin to see it—they talk of it, and many have already determined to try the "living fence." Osage orange plants are being bought and set out with the view therewith to supercede the use of rails, poles, &c. Many are planting hedges now, too, who, perhaps, are wholly uninstructed and inexperienced with the most successful and least expensive method of managing the material, out of which they expect to construct a perfect and almost imperishable fence.—Labor likely will be invested to great disadvantage in many cases. Misdirected effort may, and probably will, result in disappointment and failure—even an unmodifed condemnation of hedging, and the complete abandonment of all those pretty day dreams, in which capricious fancy portrayed to the honest farmer *perfect* fences, possessed of beauty and unlimited durability, requiring no nails, no new posts or plank to take the place of those broken down or rotted off.

It must not be presumed that hedge-plants can be stuck down anywhere, or in any manner, and without cultivation or assistance, make good fences.

The ground upon which it is desired to grow a hedge should be well plowed, or broken up sufficiently long before it is planted to raise or grow thereon a row of vegetables of some kind, such as peas, beans, potatoes, &c., manuring the rows previous to planting so as to insure, by good and clean after-culture, a remunerative return. Thus the labor expended in the preparation of the border for the hedge, is already compensated for. If briars and bushes of different kinds are in the way, cut and grub thoroughly, destroying the roots so as to prevent them from sprouting, thereby exhausting the soil and choking out the hedge-plants while small and young. As to the season for planting, there is no perceptible difference between spring and fall, if the operations are properly performed—the months of March and April for spring, and November for fall planting. A medium sized one-year old plant is best; avoid purchasing, if possible, plants that are too small, as well as those that are *over*grown. If the plants are very small and feeble, it may require five years instead of four to make a good hedge; and if, on the other hand, they are very large, the labor in planting is not only greatly increased, but the necessary clipping of large tops and heavy taproots is likely to enfeeble the growth somewhat the first season after planting.—Before planting, cut the tops off the plants, so as to leave them from one to three inches long, or above ground when planted in the spring. Cut also the roots, so that they are from six to eight inches in length. In order to have the fence straight, it is best, after levelling the border, to draw a mark by the aid of a line stretched for that purpose.—Then, if spring is the season in which the planting is to be done, the best implement for putting in the plants is a planting trowel, which can be procured at a hardware or agricultural implement store at a cost of not more than from forty to seventy-five cents. This is much better than a wooden dibble, and with it an active man, with a few hours practice, will be able to set from 5,000 to 8,000 plants in a day. That, however, depends very much on the condition of the soil in which they are to be planted.

If fall should present itself as the most suitable season, and it is desired to plant, the operation is somewhat different. A good plan to perform planting at this season is: after the mark has been drawn, as described for spring planting, to take a spade and open a furrow therewith, so that the excavation is in shape similar to the letter V, and deep enough, so that when the ends of the roots are on the bottom of the furrow, and the plants rest, at a moderate slope against its side, the tops are one or two inches below the surface. The plants covered in this manner are prevented from raising out of the soil during the freezing and thawing of winter, requiring no uncovering or removal of the ground, as they grow through easily in spring following. A plow could be used to open the furrow, and would facilitate the work, but the hedge, perhaps, would not be as straight, and, consequently, for the first few years, would not present quite as nice or systematic appearance.

The plants should be set from four to six inches apart, in single rows, and only worked and kept clean during the first two years, no shearing or pruning being necessary during that time, until the winter following the second year; *mow* them off to within four inches of the ground, with a good bramble or dutch scythe, which is, in all respects, *the* implement for giving shape to and shearing hedges. The following June, *mow* them again to a height of six or eight inches, leaving the side limbs below that untouched; in September following, top with the scythe again to about the same height as in June. Now the hedge is three years planted, and to be left without any additional clipping until July of the fourth summer, when, with the scythe, it is to be mowed into the shape of the letter A, so that its width, next to the ground, is about equal to its height.

With, and after, this treatment you will have a perfect hedge, requiring only an annual *mowing* to keep it in proper shape and space. By this practice, the clipping, or shearing, which presents itself as being a laborious process, is not only reduced to a small matter, but is invariably much better performed, in point of regularity and symmetry. When you attempt to keep in proper shape an osage orange hedge by the use of such shears as the writer has seen used in some places, (and in a couple of forced instances used himself), you apply labor to a great disadvantage, and unnecessarily multiply both labor and expense.

The scythe needs only a single trial to render certain its preference and ready adoption by all growing hedge fences as the superior implement for that purpose.

J. W. KERR,

DENTON, March 1, 1870.

Horace Greeley on Buying Farms.

EVERY LOCALITY HAS ITS ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES.

From Mr. Greeley's third article in the New York *Tribune*, on "What I know about Farming," we extract some views relative to the best locality, in which to buy a farm.—He says:

When my father was over sixty years old, and had lived some twenty years in Erie county, Pennsylvania, he said to me: "I have several times removed, and always toward the West; I shall never remove again; but were I to do so, it would be toward the East. Experience has taught me that the advantages of every section are counterbalanced by disadvantages, and that, where any crop is easily produced, there it sells low, and sometimes cannot be sold at all. I shall live and die right here; but, were I to remove again, it would not be toward the West."

This is but one side of a truth, and I give it for whatever it may be worth. Had my father plunged into the primitive forest in his twenty-fifth rather than his forty-fifth year, he would doubtless have become more reconciled to pioneer life than he ever did. I would advise no one over forty years of age to undertake, with scanty means, to dig a farm out of the dense forest, where great trees must be cut down and cut up, rolled into log-heaps and burned to ashes where they grew. Where half the timber can be sold for enough to pay the cost of cutting, the case is different; but I know right well that digging a farm out of the high woods is, to any but a man of wealth, a slow, hard task. Making one out of naked prairie, five to ten miles from timber, is less difficult, but not much. He who can locate where he has good timber on one side and rich prairie on the other is fortunate, and may hope, if his health be spared, to surround himself with every needed comfort within ten years. Still, the pioneer's life is a rugged one, especially for women and children; and I should advise any man who is worth $2,000 and has a family, to buy out an "improvement" (which, in most cases, badly needs improving) on the outskirt of civilization, rather then plunge into the pathless forest or push out upon the unbroken prairie.

He who has a farm already, and is content with it, has no reason to ask, "Whether shall I go?" and he may rest assured that thoroughly good farming will pay as well in New England as in Kansas or Minnesota. I advise no man who has a good farm anywhere and is able to keep it, to sell and migrate.—I know men who make money by growing food within twenty miles of this city quite as fast as they could in the West. If you have money to buy and work it, and know how to make the most of it, I believe you may find land really as cheap, all thing considered, in Vermont as in Wisconsin or Arkansas.

And yet I believe in migration—believe that there are thousands in the Eastern and Middle States who would improve their circumstances and prospects by migrating to the cheaper lands and broader opportunities of the West and South. For, in the first place, most men are by migration rendered more energetic and aspiring; thrown among strangers, they feel the necessity of exertion as they never felt it before. Needing almost everything, and obliged to rely wholly on themselves, they work in their new homes as they never did in their old; and the consequences are soon visible all round them.

"A stern chase is a long chase," say the sailors; and he who buys a farm mainly on credit, intending to pay for it out of the proceeds, finds interest, taxes, sickness, bad seasons, hail, frost, drouth, tornadoes, floods, &c., &c., deranging his calculations and impeding his progress, until he is often impelled to give up in despair. There are men who can surmount every obstacle and defy discouragement—these need no advice; but there are thousands who, having little means and large families, can grow into a good farm more easily and far more surely than they can pay for it; and these may wisely seek homes where population is yet sparse and land is consequently cheap. Doubtless, some migrate who might better have forborne; yet the instinct which draws our race toward sunset is nevertheless a true one.—The East will not be depopulated; but the West will grow more rapidly in the course of the next twenty years than ever in the past. The railroads which have brought Kansas and Minnesota within three days and California within a week of us, have rendered this inevitable.

In closing his article, he refers with special favor to the South, where lands are still very cheap. It is better timbered, in the average, than the West; the climate invites; the unopened mines and unused water-power call loudly for enterprise, labor and skill. It is absurd to insist that the soil is exhausted when not one-third of it has ever yet been plowed. I do not advise solitary migration to the South, because she needs schools, roads, bridges, mills, &c., &c., which the solitary immigrant can neither provide nor well do without; and I have no assurance that he, if obliged to work out for present bread, would find those ready to employ and willing to pay him; let a hundred northern farmers and mechanics worth $1,000 to $3,000 each to combine to select (through chosen agents) and buy ten or twenty thousand acres in some Southern State, embracing hill and vale, timber and tillage, water-power and minerals, and divide it equitably among themselves, after laying it out with roads, a park, a village-plat, sites for churches, schools, &c., and I am confident that they can thus make pleasant homes more cheaply and speedily there than almost anywhere else.

CHEAP HOT-BED FRAMES.—It will soon be time to think about making hot-beds for starting early plants. Glass is so cheap that few persons will think of using anything else for covering the frames, but there are cheaper materials that will answer very well, besides being more speedily prepared. One of the best materials for covering frames besides glass is common white-muslin, coated with the following composition: Take one quart of linseed oil, one ounce of sugar of lead, and three or four ounces of resin.—Pulverize the sugar of lead in a little oil, then add it to the other materials. Put all into an iron kettle and heat it until the resin is dissolved and the other ingredients are thoroughly mixed; stretch the muslin upon the frames, and apply the composition while hot. Frames prepared in this manner will last several years if kept under cover when not in use.

GET READY.—Farmers, get ready for the spring campaign. Get the plows, harrows and cultivators ready to do their work well. If you have them, see that they are all in repair; a new coat of paint will do them good and it can be given any of these days. See that they all have sharp teeth, so as to bite the soil well and thoroughly. The thorough preparation of the soil is half the battle towards raising a big crop; without it you can't raise a good crop. Get your harness, teams, double trees, single trees and everything you will need, ready, so that at the first opening of spring you can take time by the forelock and lead him and not let him lead you.

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