

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

**ScholarWorks @ UTRGV**

---

Gulf Coast Magazine

Special Collections and Archives

---

1908

## Culture of alfalfa

A. Hays

William Doherty

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/gulfcoastmag>

 Part of the [Latin American History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Gulf Coast Magazine, UTRGV Digital Library, The University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Collections and Archives at ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in Gulf Coast Magazine by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact [justin.white@utrgv.edu](mailto:justin.white@utrgv.edu), [william.flores01@utrgv.edu](mailto:william.flores01@utrgv.edu).

# THE CULTURE OF ALFALFA.

Deep Plowing Before Planting is Regarded  
as Necessary—Figures Showing Cost of  
Harvesting and Baling.

BY A. HAYS OF KINGSVILLE.



MY METHOD of preparing land and sowing alfalfa may be different from that of some of my brother farmers, but I have followed it with success and will give it for what it is worth, and as briefly as possible. To begin with, early, deep plowing is the first essential work. Then use a pulverizer, and if there remain clods mash them with a roller. In case no roller is to be had a good substitute is a drag made of 2x8 inch timbers. Almost any farmer can make a drag.

Next, I would hitch four mules to a sub-soiler and go over the same ground eighteen inches deep and sixteen to eighteen inches between furrows. After this is done work the ground down, make the irrigating ditches the desired distance apart and leave them shallow so that a mowing machine can cross them without any inconvenience.

Alfalfa should be sown from the middle of September to the middle of December and the ground should always have season enough to bring up the seed. It will not do to sow in dry ground, nor would I use more than twenty pounds of seed to the acre. To use more is a waste and alfalfa seed costs money.

In the early spring, when the alfalfa is in bloom, cut it and get it out of the way as quickly as possible. As soon as a crop is cut and gotten out of the way, the ground should be harrowed and the water turned on, provided the season has been a dry one and rain is needed.

As far as taking care of alfalfa is concerned, I have had no experience in the Lower Gulf Coast Country, having been here but a short time; but it is my opinion that it should be raked in winrows before it gets too dry or sunburned, as in either event the leaves would come off in baling and the alfalfa would be materially injured.

When alfalfa is planted as it should be you have a crop that will last a lifetime, and I know of no crop that pays the farmer better. The roots of alfalfa grow to a great depth in their search, presumably, for water, and some claim to have known them to grow as deep as thirty feet. In my own experience, however, I have not known them to go to a greater depth than fifteen feet.

Alfalfa requires much water at certain periods and in the Lower Gulf Coast Country and the Valley of the Lower Rio Grande it can not be successfully raised without irrigation unless the season should be remarkably good. In irrigating, care should be taken not to let the water stand on the ground after it has been wet the desired depth.

I could tell why I advocate deep plowing in preparing the ground for planting, but this will take up unnecessary space, and then, too, every farmer should know why.

---

### The Cost of Harvesting Alfalfa.

HIDALGO, Texas, Sept. 6, 1908.

*Wm. Doherty, Editor Gulf Coast Magazine:*

DEAR SIR: In reply to your request for a statement of the actual costs connected with the harvesting of a crop of alfalfa, I take pleasure in answering from my personal experience as follows:

In November, 1907, I planted thirty-two acres in alfalfa on the San Juan Plantation, about six miles below the town of Hidalgo. About the middle of last August, at the fifth cutting, this thirty-two acres yielded  $31\frac{1}{4}$  tons of alfalfa.

I have kept an accurate account of the costs connected with the harvesting of this fifth cutting on the above-mentioned thirty-two acres with the following results: Cost of harvesting, including hauling and stacking, 60 cents per ton; cost of baling, including cost of wire, 40 cents per ton; total cost per ton, \$1.00.

Trusting that the above information is what you desire, I beg to remain,

Very truly yours,

JOHN CLOSNER.



### WHAT'S AN INCH OF RAIN.

The rain fell in buckets, the thunder racketed terribly and the lightning drew zigzag lines of bright gold upon the violet sky.

"So you, too, don't know what an inch of rain is exactly," said the weather clerk, as he looked at his rain measuring instrument. "Very few people do, it seems. I'll explain it to you.

"An acre is 6,272,640 square inches. An inch of water on an acre is therefore 6,272,640 cubic inches. That amount, at 227 cubic inches to the gallon, equals 22,000 gallons, or 220,000 pounds, or 100 tons.

"An inch of rain is, in other words, rain falling at the rate of 100 tons to the acre."—*Philadelphia Bulletin.*

## GROWS ON RIO GRANDE LANDS.

The junco is the missing link of the tree family. Restricted to a single valley, that of the Rio Grande, in Mexico and Texas, this tree, with its small, crooked trunk bristling with thorns, is little known to the outside world. It is popularly supposed to bear no leaves, flowers or fruit, but it really bears all three.

The minute leaves are scale-like, the flowers very small and the fruit is a tiny berry. It is the only known representative of its family in all the world. It is not known that the junco ever grew anywhere outside of the Valley of the Rio Grande, or that it ever had relatives close enough to claim kinship. Some trees, now nearly extinct, had wide range in past ages—the big trees of California for example, which grew all the way to the Arctic Ocean. But the junco so far as is known has always lived in one place and has always been the same dwarfed, crooked tree that it now is.

Except as a fuel it has not been put to any use. Thousands of cords might be cut in the Valley of the Rio Grande, in Mexico and Texas. Of late, however, the growing scarcity of hardwood has called attention to the despised junco tree as a possible substitute for some of the more popular woods, and the result is a surprise to those who thought the wood had no commercial value. Clarence A. Miller, Consul at Matamoros, Mexico, has called the attention of this government to the good qualities claimed for it.

The wood sinks in water. In color it ranges from brown to black. It receives a high and beautiful polish, fitting it to take the place of such expensive woods as ebony and rosewood for small cabinet work. The trunks are so short and crooked that only small pieces of timber can be obtained from them. Few trunks exceed seven feet in length and eight inches in diameter. The wood is said to be admirably suited for the keys of musical instruments, jewel boxes and other bureau cabinets, chessmen, checkers, paper knives, knobs and other small turnery, inlaid work, and indeed for almost all purposes for which costly foreign woods, in small pieces, are now used.

Many of the trees whose woods are familiar in the lumber markets belong to large families. There are 250 members—they are called species—of the pine family, and they are scattered all over the Northern hemisphere. The beech and the oak family has even more members, and they too are widely scattered. The laurel has over 900, the palm 1,000, while the apple, counting the many varieties, is said to have more than 3,000. But the junco is fighting its life battle alone on the dry slopes of Texas and Mexico, without a relative in the world.—*Forest Service Bulletin.*



Lower Rio Grande Cotton—Planted May 5, 1908, Photographed July 25, 1908.



Photo by Keck, Successor to Wheelus, Corpus Christi.

Two-year Old Orange Grove Near Raymondville.