

Agricultural.

Besides charcoal, there are many other vegetable substances of great value as absorbents of fertilizing salts and gases that would otherwise escape from animal manures. Carbonaceous matter of every sort should be provided for this purpose. Gather the leaves of trees of all kinds, including pine straw. They contain many substances necessary for the growth of plants from which they fall, or available to other plants. Throw them into the stables and yards, moisten them and sprinkle them with lime and salt mixture, and if kept in a damp state and turned over once or twice, they form the best manure known for all kinds of trees and shrubs, and indeed afford all the necessary constituents, organic and inorganic, of all cultivated plants.

Swamp mud is another valuable absorbent. Gather the back earth of swamps, place in piles and let it dry out the superfluous moisture, and haul it to the compost or swamp muck. Swamp muck, by its elasticity, keeps the soil light and open, and is excellent both for absorbing and retaining moisture in the soil. It may be reduced with ashes or lime, either of which will destroy all its naturally acid properties. The salt and lime mixture is the best and usually the cheapest for this purpose, but leached ashes mixed with carbonaceous matter have an additional merit of being rendered soluble and available for plants and should be used thus where attainable.

The Lime and Salt Mixture is thus prepared. Take three bushels of unstacked lime, dissolve a bushel of salt in as little water as possible, and mix the solution therewith. If the lime will not take up all the brine at once, (which it will if good and fresh burned,) add little more of the brine daily, turning and adding until all is shaken up. Keep it under cover until wanted for use. Of itself it supplies the best and usually the cheapest for this purpose, but leached ashes mixed with carbonaceous matter have an additional merit of being rendered soluble and available for plants and should be used thus where attainable.

With a load of swamp earth, mix a bushel and a half of the lime and salt mixture intimately, which is in a moderately moist state, and in thirty days it will be decomposed. Upon a layer of this earth six inches thick, spread a coat of fresh stable manure, each day covering it with ten times its quantity of prepared muck, which will absorb all the grass and salts, and the accurate and uniformity of the mixture will never be lost. In reducing the heap must be kept moist, or no fermentation will be produced. Keep the surface moist but never leached. This is the way to produce a strong compost.

A thick layer of muck should be kept also in the top pens and stables to absorb the urine, removing the solid manure from the latter daily, and the muck at the end of each week. This muck also the house slops of all kinds should be poured, and where charcoal is not employed, a bushel every three days should be thrown into the privy to destroy the offensive gases produced. The muck, whether prepared with the above mixtures, with fresh animal manure. Neither lime nor ashes unless in excess, when thus combined with vegetable matters, will drive off the ammonia.

Leaf-mould, or the black surface soil of the wood, is of still more value. This is free from the acid properties of swamp muck, and may be supplied directly to most plants in the flower garden, many of which will not flourish unless this material is present in the soil. It is of still more importance for potting plants in the greenhouse. For the kitchen and garden, it may be composted like swamp muck with fresh animal manure. It is indispensable in garden culture.

Tan bark is another material abounding in carbon, which, to some extent, is used as an absorbent of animal manure. It may be beneficially applied directly to strawberries, to which it answers the double purpose of mounding and manure. But the crowns of the plants must not be covered, and for all purposes it should be obtained as much decomposed as possible. Tan may be applied directly to fresh manure, and is ready to cover in the fall. After they are dropped and manure applied, a coat of tan, composted with ashes or lime and salt mixture, may be given, and finish planting by covering with earth. It improves the yield materially, and the quantity of well decomposed matters do. Where swamp muck or leaf-mould can be obtained, it is hardly worth while to use tan as an absorbent of animal manure.

It is not of sufficient value to be worth hauling far. In trenching, it may, with other coarse matters, be mixed with the bottom soil to lighten its texture and act as a reservoir of moisture. For corn it may, after composting with ashes, be mixed with the surface soil, which will make them wear much longer than the old style of manure. If used in excess, it will be of some service to the crop.

It is difficult to reduce, but if kept moist, the lime and salt mixture will do it. It may be steamed in the stock yard six or eight inches thick, and sprinkled pretty thickly with the mixture. The treating of the stock with it will mix it. Let the whole be turned over in a moist state once or twice, and in the course of the winter it will become a valuable application to the plants that are to be sown in the spring. There are abundant elements of fertility in it, but it is more difficult to render them available than with any other vegetable substance; and it is upon the whole, quite a dangerous article to experiment with. Reduced thoroughly by composting it with stable manure, using in the case no lime, and then mixed with decayed leaves and plenty of sharp sand, it makes a tolerable compost for growing those plants which require peat, such as Azaleas and Rhododendrons. Tan, properly composted, will prove of most use in light soils deficient in vegetable matter, and when less decomposed, for opening the texture of close, heavy clays.

Decayed chips, saw dust, shaving, etc., best applied to Irish potatoes, as directed in the case of tan bark. They should be covered with soil to promote a speedy decay. They should have much the nature of tan bark to its utility, and may likewise, when somewhat decayed, be composted with stable manure and used as peat. All these substances are valuable for burning clay or for charring, and then to be incorporated with the light soil, or phosphate of lime. In the case of tan bark, this is undoubtedly the safest and most profitable way to use it. Gardening for the South.

AGRICULTURAL NOTES.—The Ohio Farmer gets off the following:—Large herds are generally most admired by farmers; but farmers are most advantaged who keep few. Prosperity is generally based on knowledge and industry; the swine will get most from the least. Farmers are like cows, neither will they get full crops without industry. Because a man who attends a flock of sheep is a shepherd, it is not so with a man who keeps cows should be a cow-herd.

We like to see a farmer increase the growth of useful plants and shrubs around his home, but do not like to see him use rails, posts, and boards to propagate with.

POTATO BALLS.—Potato from the balls of seed, proper may or may not be better than the potato produced by the balls. The seeds are washed out of the balls and sowed just like tomato and onion seed, and carefully sown in good soil in the spring.

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