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Forage and Pasture Crops. A Handbook of Information about the Grasses and Legumes Grown for Forage in the United States. By W. A. Wheeler. D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., New York. 752 pages. 1950.

THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED grasslands improvement program of the Department of Agriculture and the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities enhances the timeliness of this comprehensive treatment of the development, characteristics, production, and regional adaptability of the grasses and legumes used throughout the United States as forage and soil-conserving crops. Prepared under the auspices of the Field Seed Institute of North America, this book will be a handy reference for those who are interested in improving America's billion acres of grassland.

The author has borrowed not only from his own years of distinguished service in the field of agronomy and seed marketing, but also from that of many of his compatriots in the Department of Agriculture and in the Experiment Stations throughout the country. He has brought together in one authoritative but readable book much of the basic agronomic information on grasses and legumes used for both harvested forage and pasture.

Part I comprises a general discussion of forage and pasture crops, including their characteristics, adaptation, and classification, their response to various soils and fertilizers, their establishment, management, improvement, and protection against insects and diseases, and their use as green manure and cover crops, as hay and as silage. Parts II and III provide a more detailed discussion of each of the commercial legumes and grasses. Part IV includes a table of basic grass-seed data and an extensive list of some 1,200 references which will be especially useful to readers who want more detailed or more localized information. Throughout the book, the amount of pertinent detail is in proportion to the commercial importance of the grass or legume discussed.

This current and comprehensive agronomic reference on grasses and legumes is definitely needed. Its publication serves to emphasize the need for information on the economics of forage production on American farms. The author says that "the ultimate objective of a forage improvement program is to produce superior varieties of each important grass and legume species that will enable farmers to feed their livestock more adequately and more economically." He repeatedly recognizes the need for economic production and utilization of forage crops. But such a handbook cannot provide the farmer with many guides as to the costs and returns to be expected from the various methods of establishing, maintaining, and utilizing the different forage crops.

Farm management specialists and other economists will find a challenge in this agronomic handbook — that of providing comparable economic guides in a comprehensive grassland improvement program. Primarily economic rather than agronomic considerations have tended to retard the improvement of our grasslands. Yet pertinent economic research has lagged far behind agronomic research in this important field. Nor can we confine our research to the experimental phases. If we expect farmers to make the grassland improvements which we think are desirable, we have both a responsibility and an opportunity to help them determine how grasses can be established or improved profitably on their own farms.

H. L. Stewart

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