



Corn and Weeds

CROP plants and weeds often have the same preferences when it comes to growing conditions.

The curse pronounced upon the earth under Adam's handiwork: "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee," might be regarded as a poetic expression of the inherent ecological similarities between most crop plants and the commonest weeds. Both corn and cocklebur, wheat and Canada thistle, like the same richness and moisture in soils, the same growing temperatures and times of rain.

Most of all, weeds like to have their soil well stirred, like good porridge, just as our preferred crop plants like it. So when the farmer plows his field and makes it ready for his crops, he plows it also for the uninvited plant guests that take care of their own sowing. And they are usually quicker about getting up than the seed which he plants with such tender care.

You can get an idea of the natural preferences of common weeds by noting where they grow when (if ever) they are found away from cultivated soil. Ragweed and pigweed, goosefoot and velvet-leaf and all their vagabond kin, are to be found in situations where some natural disturbance of the soil

more or less closely simulates the tilth of a cultivated field. You will find them where gully erosion or land-slipping has exposed fresh soil surface, or on river-bottom land where newly deposited mud is drying out in the wake of a receding flood.

The surest way to get rid of weeds is to give up trying to cultivate crops. Let a field lie fallow long enough, and after a couple of years of initial weed triumph the quiet insidious grasses will start edging in, and presently they will present a solid phalanx of sod that will resolutely prevent any weed seed from gaining the least foothold. It is even possible that the treeless condition of the prairies, before the virgin sod was plowed to make way for corn, was due to this interlocking front of the grasses, that prevented tree seeds from reaching moist soil and germinating.

It is noteworthy that most of our common weeds resemble crop plants not only in their ecological preferences but in their life history. That is, the greater number of weed species are annuals. Like the crop plants with which they compete, they depend on large production of quick-germinating seeds every year, which can be scattered as widely as natural means will permit, ready to seize and exploit any square inch of unoccupied soil.

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SCIENCE CLUBS OF AMERICA

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NEWS OF CLUBS

SCOTCH PLAINS, N. J.—The Science Research Club of Scotch Plains High School, sponsored by H. S. Gutknecht, head of the Science Department, prepared a radio script dramatizing the work of Sir Frederick Banting, recently killed in an air crash. The story of the famous scientist's discovery and isolation of insulin was impressively delivered over the school's public address system.

HURLOCK, Md.—The ? Or Why Club, sponsored by Miss Helen Warren, has divided

into three groups, one making a model airplane, another working with the microscope, and the third developing individual scientific projects.

NEW YORK CITY—The Biology Squad of the DeWitt Clinton High School, under the direction of Miss Dorothy P. Tuthill, is working out advanced research problems in slide making, hydroponics, genetics experiments with fruit flies, guinea pigs, tropical fish, and the preparation of museum mounts such as stained bone and tanned skins.

ONEONTA, N. Y.—The Chem Squad of Oneonta Senior High School, sponsored by Mrs. Madeleine Frink Coutant, who is also Director of the Oneonta Science Center, is holding monthly movie shows on scientific topics not taught in high schools. In February the Squad will visit a science club in Walton, N. Y., and early in May will feature a Science Congress.

BROOKLYN, N. Y.—Members of the A. L. Chemists of Abraham Lincoln High School are developing Science Congress demonstrations in Science Fair exhibits under the sponsorship of N. Roseman. Laboratory demonstrations and experiments are a regular feature of the club's program.

HARRISON, N. Y.—Chemistry, biology, physics and astronomy are major interests of the Kohut School Science Club, sponsored by Albert J. Metlicka. The club also works on photography and makes many field trips for nature study.

BRONX, N. Y.—Members of the Morris High School Photography Club, sponsored by Miss Gisella Kauf, teach developing, printing and enlarging to interested students who have not had much experience in this field. Various club members give lectures and demonstrations and produce photographs used in the school newspaper.

DELMAR, N. Y.—The Eighth Grade Science Club at Bethlehem Central School, sponsored by Philip B. Moore, is holding class room demonstrations, assembly programs, laboratory experiments, field trips and scientific movies.

BROOKLYN, N. Y.—The Physics Club of Abraham Lincoln High School is developing projects to illustrate interesting and showy experiments in physics. Demonstrations are held at regular club meetings under the sponsorship of Louis Steinberg.

Clubs are invited to become affiliated with SCA for a nominal \$2 for 20 members or less. You can become an associate of SCA for 25 cents, which includes a copy of the 128-page Science Handbook for 1942. Address: Science Clubs of America, 1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D. C.

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