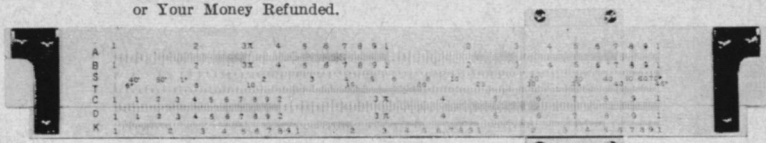


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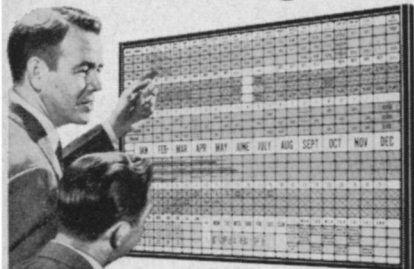
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AGRICULTURE

Infrared Photos From Air Detect Salt-Damaged Soil

➤ A SIMPLE, rapid method is now being developed to tell farmers when too much salt is creeping into the soil and threatening their crops.

By taking aerial photographs with film sensitive to infrared rays, scientists of the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Weslaco, Tex., are able to detect areas where salt water is beginning to damage cotton plants.

Two facts about cotton led scientists to develop this method of photography from airplanes:

1. Cotton leaves of healthy plants reflect most light in the infrared portion of the light spectrum.

2. If the plant is suffering from lack of moisture due to salinity, the leaves become progressively darker or dull bluish green.

These symptoms of moisture stress are directly in proportion to the amount of salt accumulating in the root area.

The usual method of determining salinity, by accurate laboratory analysis from a large number of soil samples, is time consuming. The aerial photograph method, developed in cooperation with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, can indicate the status of salt in the soil to a depth of four feet.

If farmers can locate salt-damaged areas before the salt can cause serious damage, they can immediately start reclaiming the land for the next crop.

Six shades can be seen in the photographs, stated agricultural engineers V. I. Myers and L. R. Ussery of the Research Service. The shades range from white in the healthy plants, through gray in the salt-affected plants, to dark gray or black in the bare soil.

• Science News Letter, 84:98 Aug. 17, 1963

Do You Know?

Magnesium-lithium alloy is 25% lighter than magnesium, which is 40% lighter than aluminum.

There are 105 boy *babies* for every 100 girl babies at birth in the United States despite the fact that the male miscarriage rate is higher than that for females.

For nine successive years through 1962, live *births* in the United States exceeded four million annually, largely accounting for the high population gains.

• Science News Letter, 84:98 Aug. 17, 1963