

Transcription of GEO/ADD/32/2029-2030 *Notes on sainfoin* [1756-1805]

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Source text: for 2029: *The Complete Farmer: or, a General Dictionary of Husbandry in all its branches* sub. 'Saintfoin', pp. 382-4. This volume is held in the Royal Collection (ref RCIN 1057470. WL 90) For the details, see transcription.

For 2030: *The Improved Culture of Three Principal Grasses, Lucerne, Sainfoin, and Burnet* (London 1775), pp. 203-14.

In the text of 2029 below, the relationship to the source text is indicated as follows: numbers in italics are page references; elisions in italics indicates cuts from the original; red text is an insertion or paraphrase, italicised text short omissions.

A similar practice is adopted for 2030, although this is much more of a set of notes.

2029

[382] Saintfoin, or sainfoin, the name given by the French, and continued by us to a species of plant, frequently used for the food of Cattle, either fresh or dried; it is called holy hay, or wholesome hay, from its excellent nutritive quality. The stalks of the plant are commonly about two feet long, but they grow sometimes to five or six feet, and it has tufts of red flowers of three, four, or five inches in length.

It will make forty times greater increase in poor land [*than*] the common turf; arising from its long perpendicular root, which is of the kind called taproots, that sinks to a great depth to attract its nourishment. The length of this root is scarcely to be credited but by [*any but*] those who have seen it, it is frequently drawn out of the ground to the length of twelve or fourteen feet, but it is said to be often thirty feet or more in length. [...]

It always succeeds where its roots run deep, and produces the best crops upon land where there is no hard under soil to obstruct their passage. An under soil of clay by retaining the water and chilling the roots may kill these plants. [...]

The best way of sowing it is in drills, [...] the seed should not be covered with more than half an inch of soil, about a bushel of seed to an Acre is the proper calculation if the Seed be good; it should be sowed early in the spring, and not with Corn

The method of knowing whether the Seed is good, is by sowing a certain number of the seeds and seeing how many plants are produced by them. The external signs of the Seed being good are, that [2] the husk is of a bright colour, and the kernel plump, of a light grey or blue colour, and sometimes of a shining black, [...] as that arises from receiving wet in the field, not to being half rotted in the heap.

If the kernel be cut a-cross, and appear greenish and fresh, it indicates its being good; if of a yellowish colour, and friable, and looks thin and pitted, these are bad signs; [...] when judiciously managed four gallons of good Seed to an acre is sufficient. [...]

The best mode of calculating how many plants should be allowed to a Perch, is to compute how much hay each large plant will produce; for if kept single, and well cultivated, they will all be large ones. Without culture they never arrive at a fourth part of the size that they do with it. The hay of a large single cultivated [383] plant will weigh more than half a pound, an hundred and twelve plants upon a square perch, weighing but one quarter of a pound each, amount to two tuns per Acre. If Saintfoin be planted on some sorts of ground early in

the spring, and hoed, it will sometimes produce a crop the following Summer; [...] on good land it will yield two very good crops annually, with moderate culture and management.

The crop must be moderate the first year, it will increase amazingly every succeeding year; when well hoed it will grow as much in a fortnight as otherwise in Six Weeks; the quick growth not only makes the plant large, but better nourishment to the Cattle, whether eat[en] green, or made into hay. [...]

[3] No Cattle to be suffered to come on the Saintfoin the first Winter, [...] and Sheep not the following Summer and Winter; it ought to be manured the first Winter. [...] It may be mowed before in bloom, and is admirable food for horned cattle, and yields a better second crop than if allowed to stand till in bloom. In making it into hay care must be taken, that the flowers do not drop off as cattle are very fond of them, and they induce them to eat the rest of the plant: [384] Mr. Tull says that this hay is so nutritive, that he kept a team of horses in good order though they worked hard the whole year, without giving them any oats, but the hay of this plant can never be so good as when cultivated with the [horse-] hoe; for in the common husbandry, it blossoms almost as soon as out of the ground. [...]

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## 2030

[6] Memorandum

[5] [203] The Land to be thoroughly cleaned from Weeds, the Sainfoin [204] sowed as early in March as the land can be prepared for it, a bushel of Seed is sufficient for an Acre.

If the land is [very] dry and fine, [...] little harrowing will necessary to cover the Seed; which is the most difficult operation; the Seed being very light it is not easy to cover it, and if heavy harrows are used they are apt to bury the Seed too deep.

[207] When the Plants are five or six inches above ground, they should be set out regularly with an Land hoe; leaving the strongest plants at about eight inches distance every way from each other. [...]

[208] Sainfoin succeeds best when sowed alone, it should be dressed most springs with fine powdered Manure, coal ashes, soot, and such like are the most proper.

[209] Cattle must not be suffered to feed on it for a couple of years. [...]

[213-14] The continuing annually to hoe the weeds will great benefit the Sainfoin.

[...]