

Gardening Easier In Interior Alaska

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The results of the last eight growing seasons in Fairbanks have given me a great deal of confidence in the potential of this area for home gardening and commercial truck crop production. I am just now beginning to believe and say what I have known for some time; "Interior Alaska is the easiest and most rewarding place that I have gardened."

My experience includes gardening in the Matanuska Valley, Minnesota and Iowa. It has taken me a long time to say this because even I have been influenced by the negative concept toward the growing of things this far north.

Please note that I am not saying that gardening in Alaska is easy; only that I find it easier than other places I have been. Successful gardening anywhere requires a certain amount of "sweat" and "know-how", and Alaska is no exception. You don't just throw a few seeds on the ground and expect them to sprout, take root and develop into a bountiful garden. From past experiences we have learned that certain varieties do exceptionally well while others are near total failures. During the last few years the gardeners and we at the Experimental Station together made good progress in developing the "know-how" for gardening in Alaska. This combination along with the right variety and "sweat" has allowed for really rewarding experiences.

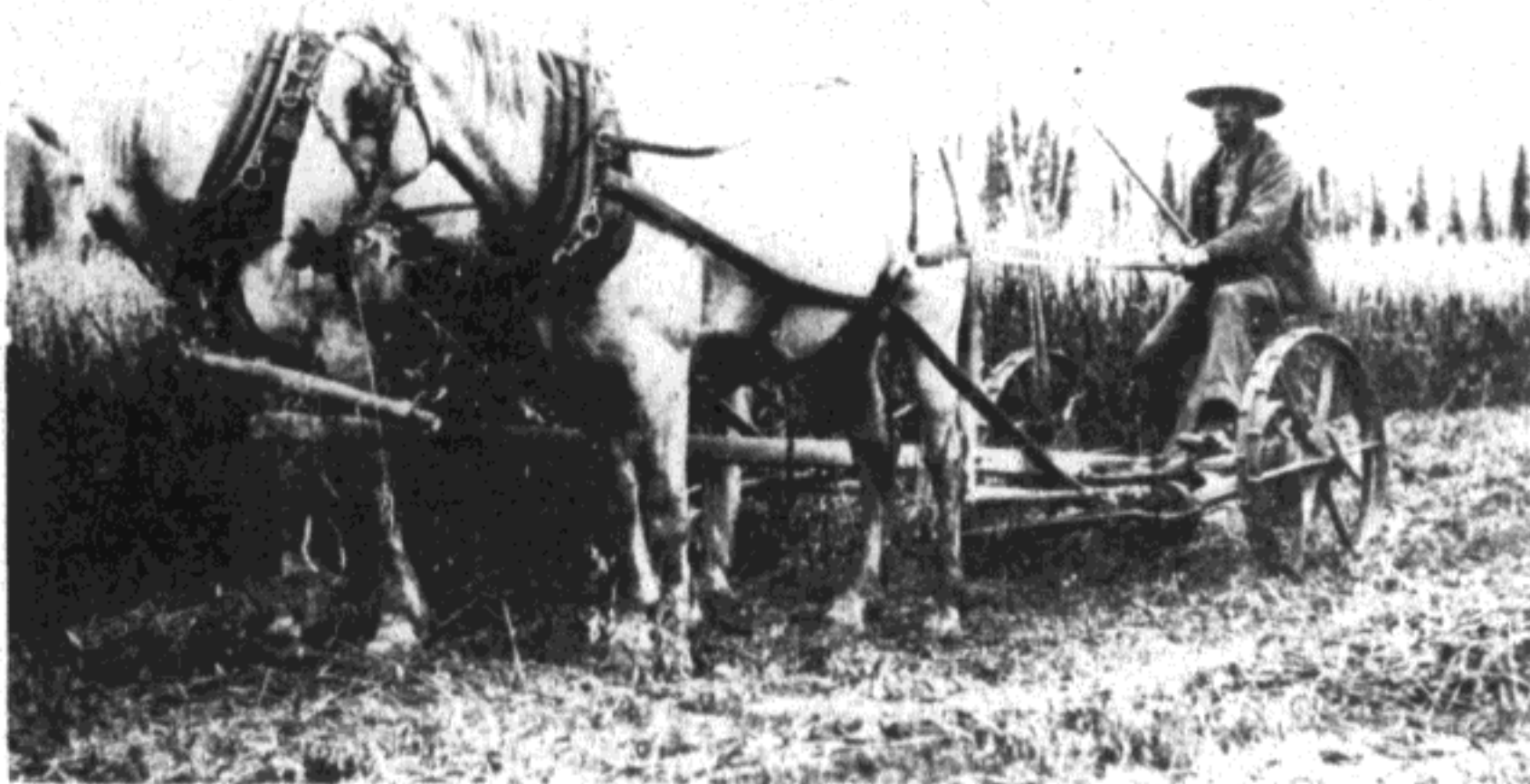
Some of my data show that we can produce yields of certain crops that are 2-4 times greater than produced nationally. We have known and accepted this for cabbage, but we have difficulty accepting it for other crops. The question can be raised; if one plant can produce phenomenal growth in this environment why not others? There also has to be a reason for the fast growth rate.

If we analyze our climate to determine why we can produce the fabulous growth of 50-70 lbs. per plant in the short 90-100 days of growing season, we find something really new all the time. It is due to our long days.

If you add up the hours of sunshine we receive during a period of 97 days from May 24 to August 31, you find that we have

which can grow during the near 24 hours of sunlight each day, and this again emphasizes the importance of selecting the right variety.

Early Days at the Experimental Station



Harvesting oats in the early days of the Government Experimental Station. Both horses appear to have liberated a portion of the harvest for their immediate needs.

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