



BERMUDA BUILDS SOIL

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BERMUDAGRASS, once considered a pest of the farm lands, was employed by Harry Stiers of Indianola, Oklahoma, to convert his cropland—unprofitable for cultivation in the early '40's—to land that now produces 50 bushels of corn per acre (shown above).

Fifteen years ago, Stiers was attempting to maintain the fertility of his soil by planting alternate rows of corn and cowpeas. But the land was so severely eroded that he gave up the idea of trying to crop it.

In the spring of 1942 Stiers, long a cooperator with the Gaines Creek Soil Conservation District, decided to sprig his badly-eroded, unproductive acres to Bermudagrass and overseed it with Korean lespedeza for pasture. Later he added Hop clover and some other legumes. For 12 years, he grazed his ever-increasing herd of shorthorn cattle on the thriving pasture.

In the spring of 1955, he plowed up the pasture and planted the field to maize. He was pleased with the yield of grain, and the Bermuda made good

growth after the maize matured. This furnished an abundance of pasture.

The excellent cover protected the land, and soil and water losses from the field were negligible.

In 1956, he prepared an excellent seedbed and planted the field to corn (shown above), applying 200 pounds of 10-20-10 per acre at seeding time. Although the rains failed to come, the corn grew luxuriantly, and when the corn was harvested in September, the once unprofitable field had yielded 50 bushels per acre.

Stiers is convinced that Bermudagrass is an excellent crop to use in the conservation crop rotation with corn, vetch, and small grain. The abundance of Bermuda cover and roots improves the soil structure and adds organic matter that keeps the soil "alive." It enables the soil to soak up water and hold it until the plants need it.

Vetch and other legumes, together with the judicious use of balanced fertilizers, give added insurance for profitable yields. ◀◀◀