

## Our Experience in Crops



(excerpts from Palmetto Leaves pages 185-195)

*The book, Palmetto Leaves, was published in 1872. The author, Harriet Beecher Stowe, was living in Mandarin, Florida (near Jacksonville). In this excerpt, she describes the experiences of three farmers growing crops in north Florida in the late 1800's*

**A** few years ago, three brothers, farmers, from Vermont, exhausted by the long, hard winters there, came to Florida to try an experiment. They bought two hundred and seventy-five acres in the vicinity of Mandarin at one dollar per acre. It was pineland, that had been cut over twice for timber, and was now considered of no further value by its possessor, who threw it into the hands of a land-agent to make what he could of it. It was the very cheapest kind of Florida land.

Of this land they cleared only thirty-five acres. The fencing cost two hundred dollars. They put up a large, unplastered, two-story house, with piazzas to both floors, at a cost of about a

thousand dollars. The additional outlay was on two mules and a pair of oxen, estimated at four hundred dollars. The last year, they put up a sugar-mill and establishment at a cost of five hundred dollars.

An orange-grove, a vineyard, and a peach-orchard, are all included in the program of these operators, and are all well under way. But these are later results. It is not safe to calculate on an orange-grove under ten years, or on a vineyard or peach-orchard under four or five.

We have permission to copy verbatim certain memoranda of results with which they have furnished us.

## CABBAGES.

First Year:-Sowed seed in light sandy soil without manure. Weak plants, beaten down by rain, lost.

Second Year:-Put out an acre and a half of fine plants: large part turned out poorly: Part of the land was low, sour, and wet, and all meagerly fertilized. Crop sold in Jacksonville for two hundred and fifty dollars.

Third Year:-Three acres better, but still inadequately manured, and half ruined by the Christmas frost: brought about eight hundred dollars.

Fourth Year (1871-72.)-Two acres better manured; planted in low land, on ridges five feet apart: returned six hundred dollars. In favorable seasons, with good culture, an acre of cabbages should yield a gross return of five hundred dollars, of which three hundred would be clear profit.

## CUCUMBERS.

First Year:-Planted four acres, mostly new, hard, sour land, broad-casting fifty bushels of lime to the acre, and using some weak, half-rotted compost in the hills: wretched crop. The whole lot sent North: did not pay for shipment.

Second Year:-An acre and a half best land, heavily manured with well-rotted compost worked into drills eight feet apart: yielded fifty bushels, which brought two hundred and fifty dollars in New York. More would have been realized, except that an untimely hail-storm spoiled the vines prematurely.

Third Year:-An acre and a half, well-cultivated and manured, yielded four hundred bushels, and brought a gross return of thirteen hundred dollars.

## SWEET-POTATOES.

Every year we have had pretty good success with them on land well prepared with lime and ashes. We have had three hundred and fifty bushels to the acre.

## PEAS.

May be extraordinarily profitable, and may fail entirely: A mild winter, without severe frosts, would bring them early into market. The Christmas freeze of 1870 caught a half-acre of our peas in blossom, and killed them to the ground.

Planted in the latter part of January; both peas and potatoes are pretty sure. We have not done much with peas; but a neighbor of ours prefers them to cabbages. He gets about three dollars per bushel.