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FARMING IN PIMA COUNTY

BY

C. B. BROWN

from Mrs Geo. J. Roskruge
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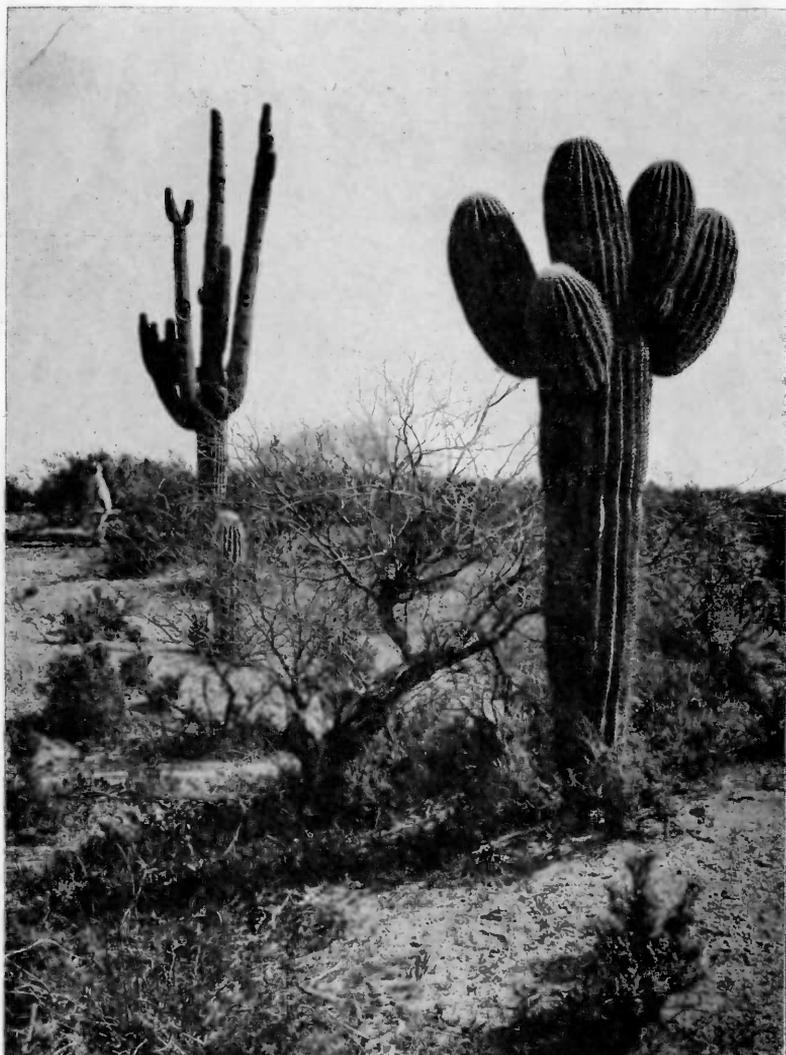


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"With the aid of man the desert has bloomed like a rose."

FARMING IN PIMA COUNTY



FARMING on an extensive scale in Pima County has been undertaken for only a few years, but during this period it has made rapid progress. The Santa Cruz and Rillito Valleys are the principal sections now under cultivation. These valleys embrace a rich acreage of land which is directly suburban to Tucson. The land extends along both sides of the Santa Cruz and Rillito rivers and is equal in fertility to that of the richest river bottom lands in the West. Tucson is a beautiful home city of 25,000 people on the main line of the Southern Pacific, El Paso and Southwestern and S. P. of Mexico railroads, and is the commercial center of Arizona and the gateway to the West Coast of Mexico.

Climatic Conditions—Probably no other place in the United States has a more delightful and healthful winter climate than this section of Arizona. Temperatures rarely go below freezing, and the days are generally warm enough that little fuel is needed outside of the kitchen. The sun shines practically every day and high winds are not frequent at any time of the year. The warm winters make it unnecessary to put large investments into expensive buildings for proper protection of people and livestock. In Pima County the money you have invested in your land is productive practically throughout the year as crops can be kept growing continuously. The rainfall in the valley averages about 11.75 inches per year. Where dry farming is practiced in the mountain districts the yearly precipitation is nearly twice this amount. The rainy season occurs usually during the months of July and August.

Soil—Pima County has a wide variety of soils which have their special adaptations. The prevailing types in the valley are a sandy loam and what is termed an adobe. Both types are fertile, but the adobe needs the addition of organic matter to provide ready absorption of water and easy cultivation. We have very little alkali and no drainage problems.

Irrigation—Most of the farming in the county is done by irrigation. The acreage now actually being farmed by this method is about 18,000 acres and with development, some of which is now under way, probably an additional 20,000 can be irrigated. The water is secured by pumping from liberal water-bearing gravel stratas adjacent to the bed of the Santa Cruz River. The lift is not great and so far there has been no appreciable lowering of the water level in the valley, which has a very extensive watershed. Our only drawback in the past has been lack of sufficient equipment

to get the water out. This condition is being rapidly improved and the land under irrigation is producing excellent crops each year.

Dry Farming is being done on a small scale at present and is confined to the mountain sections, principally in the foothills of the Santa Rita Mountains located in the southern part of the county. The raising of cash crops on these lands is not encouraged; but in connection with livestock, dry farming is profitable. Dairying is being encouraged for localities where dry farming is practiced.

Livestock—Pima County covers an area of 52 by 165 miles. A great deal of this territory is occupied by Indian Reservations upon which is carried a large number of cattle and other livestock. The remainder of this vast territory is largely devoted to livestock production, and there are several big outfits operating. The raising of cattle is one of the main agricultural resources of the county.

CROPS AND KINDS OF FARMING ADAPTED TO PIMA COUNTY

Alfalfa—One of the principal crops grown in the valley and one of the surest money getters at present. Choice alfalfa hay is bringing \$30.00 per ton at present and the yield per acre, where properly handled, is from five to eight tons. Most of the alfalfa produced in the valley is utilized by dairymen. Hairy Peruvian is the variety most grown.

Barley—Barley is a first crop and is sown in October or later. It affords excellent pasture during the winter and early spring months. If it is desired to harvest the crop for hay or grain, the stock are removed in late winter. Most of the barley sown here is utilized as pasture or harvested for hay in May or early June. The yield of hay is from two to three tons per acre and this sold during the past season for \$18.00 to \$22.00 per ton. This being a proven two-crop section, the barley is followed by grain sorghum or other crop.

Cotton—This is the first season that cotton has been produced in Pima County on a commercial scale. The Pima variety of long staple Egyptian cotton is planted exclusively. The success of this crop in the county depends upon the growing season, which is about ten days shorter than that of the Salt River Valley, but with early planting, proper cultivation and irrigation, high grade cotton can be produced successfully and profitably.

Corn—This is a very successful crop in the county and is being grown extensively, mostly as a silage crop. If grain is desired, 40 to 65 bushels per acre can be produced. The best time to plant is in June or early July. It is a good crop to follow barley. Silage yields of 20 tons per acre can be obtained. It is an excellent crop for the dairy farmer. Mexican June and Papago Sweet Corn are the two principal varieties grown in the valley. For dry farming Hickory King and Improved Squaw are the best adapted varieties now grown.

Wheat—This crop can be successfully grown, but other crops will often bring a larger return. The yield is from 25 to 45 bushels per acre. The usual price is that obtained in California or Kansas City, plus the freight to Tucson.

Beans—An excellent crop to plant after small grains in June. They will aid in building up the soil. The Mexican frijole and California pink are the two varieties generally planted. They mature in October, and yield 800 to 1500 pounds per acre.

Other Crops—Hegari, Kafir, Milo, and Feterita are all well adapted grain sorghums. Hegari is making an especially good showing; and might be termed a dual purpose sorghum, as it is both a heavy grain and forage producer. Yields of from one to two tons of grain per acres. The feeding value of these sorghums are generally too well known to need comment.

Sudan Grass—One of our most dependable hay crops belonging to the sorghum family. As many as four crops per year can be cut. The first crop can be harvested in from 75 to 90 days, and succeeding crops at intervals of 30 to 45 days. It will yield from four to seven tons per acre. Sudan grass is richer in protein than the other sorghums, and is an excellent hay for the dairy cows. It is an easy crop to grow.

Peanuts—Peanuts are a well adapted crop and should be more extensively grown than they are at present. They fit in well as a second crop and are a soil improver. There are a number of other legumes which can be successfully grown and which would be beneficial to the soil.

Truck Crops—There is a great opportunity in the Santa Cruz Valley for this type of farming. Tucson could assimilate a large output of such crops and any surplus could be easily marketed in nearby mining towns and camps. With the addition of liberal amounts of organic matter, the soil is well suited to vegetable growing and the climate is unusually favorable for winter gardening. This field is but little developed at present, but it certainly will not remain so. Truck growers should investigate this opportunity.

Winter Garden Crops—During December, January, February, and March our gardens mature head lettuce, spinach, table beets, turnips, radishes, celery, cauliflower, onions, cabbage, carrots parsnips, asparagus, and numerous other vegetables; and during the balance of the year are producing in addition to the above, green peas, tomatoes, cucumbers, strawberries, string beans, cantaloupes, watermelons, casaba melons, potatoes, peppers, etc.

Cantaloupes and Watermelons—This valley is adapted to melon growing. Cantaloupes have a very fine flavor, maturing in July, which season comes between the seasons of the Imperial Valley of California and Colorado; and should the local demand be supplied they may be shipped at high prices to eastern markets or communities about Tucson not able to produce them. Watermelons grow to perfection in quality and the yield is heavy.

Lettuce—The Santa Cruz Valley has much soil that is admirably suited to the production of first class head lettuce, and only lack of an outside market is keeping down commercial production of this crop.

Sweet Potatoes—This crop is very successful, giving very good yields and commanding a good price. As we have no curing and storage houses, only enough are raised to supply the local demand for a brief period of the year.

Fruit Growing—Competent horticulturists who are thoroughly acquainted with this valley see great possibilities here in commercial orcharding. Several fruits have already been tested out and proved successful. These are principally peaches, apricots, and grapes. There are several orchards which have been yielding a large amount of high quality fruit for several years. The setting out of adapted fruit trees and vines is being encouraged by conservative agricultural workers.

Dairying—This industry is being carried on very successfully and on quite an extensive scale. Most of the dairymen are organized. They have their own bottling and manufacturing plant which is probably one of the best equipped of its kind in the State and market their own product. Green feed most of the year, the elimination of expensive buildings and other equipment for winter use, and the wide range of crops to select from, enable the dairymen to produce dairy products as cheaply as most any place in the country. The principal breed of dairy cattle in the valley is the Holstein.

Poultry—Chicken raising is rapidly becoming an important industry in the county. Owing to mild climatic conditions, no expensive houses are required, and with green feed the entire year the hens lay continuously, except during the brief moulting season. The favorable conditions for the poultryman to raise his own grain and green feed, taken in connection with an average price of 65 cents per dozen for eggs, which at times reach 85 cents, and a price of 30 to 50 cents per pound, live weight, for chickens, make it a profitable business. Ducks, geese, and turkeys are being successfully raised and bring good prices on the local market.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Labor—The supply of labor is plentiful at most seasons of the year, and can be procured from \$2.50 to \$3.00 per day without board. For such special work as cotton picking the daily wage would, of course, be much higher than the above.

Roads—The roads leading to and through the valley are very good and, owing to the light rainfall, do not require a great deal of attention. Continuous improvement is being made in our road system by the county, state and national government. In the foothills adjoining these lands there is an inexhaustive supply of gravel, ideal for surfacing roads, drive driveways, walks, concrete work, etc.

Schools—Arizona's educational system ranks third in the entire United States. Pima County's schools are second to none in the State. Tucson is the educational center of Arizona. The University of Arizona, comprising three colleges, is located here.

Water—For domestic purposes water is reached at a depth of from twenty to forty feet by drilling or digging open wells. On the higher, or what is termed mesa land, a considerably greater depth is necessary. Analysis shows this water to be almost one hundred per cent pure, being free from deleterious salts or alkali. For many years the City of Tucson has used this water for all purposes. As you know, too much stress cannot be placed on the question of good water on the farm and we are particularly fortunate in this respect.

Insect and Rodent Pests—We have them here as they do everywhere else and you will find them no more serious here than elsewhere. We have a well organized Farm Bureau in this county and injurious insect and rodent pests are being brought under control by organized effort.

Natural Scenery and Wild Game—Those who love an occasional outing in the mountains where nature has not yet been tamed by man will find their desire for such enjoyment gratified here. The valley is surrounded by several mountain ranges, avoiding the monotony of a landscape without a background. Mt. Lemmon is Pima County's summer playground and sportsman's paradise, where plenty of wild game abounds. In the valley quail and duck hunting can be enjoyed.

CONCLUSION

We have taken particular pains in getting up this bulletin to be conservative and not to give a word picture filled with superlative terms. We do not believe the latter class of advertising pays in the long run; and we want you to find the country just as we have represented it. For further detailed information write to

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