

### **Planting Pig Pastures.**

Janelle seeded the five hog pastures today. By the end of May these pastures will be lush gardens of Grasses, legumes and brassicas.

The pigs will be able to enjoy fresh greens and vegetables well into November. Each week or so, we will move an electric barrier and give them a new section of the pasture. By locking the pigs out of the spent section, that section will reseed itself and regrow. We can get two or three crops out of each section of pasture.

We plant a variety of seeds. Annual grasses such as oats, barley and wheat, legumes such as red clover beans and cow peas, brassicas such as radishes, turnips, and canola.

Farmers are learning in recent decades, ( or perhaps relearning.) that plants prefer to grow in a community. Not in monocultures as humans prefer in their fields and gardens.

Nature ("Natural) does not work in monocultures.

Seeding our pig pastures is a multi-step project.

First, I worked the soil with a small disc, over a week ago. That opens the surface, and encourages unwanted weed seeds to germinate.

Then, on the day of seeding I till the surface again to terminate those weeds and to prepare the seed bed.

Next, Janelle planted the relatively larger seeds such as oats, barley, wheat, sunflowers and cowpeas. The largest seeds need to be planted around an inch deep. I harrow the surface to work the large seeds in.

Then Janelle spreads the small seeds on the surface in one mixed batch.

The final step is to roll a heavy packer over the pastures. The packer puts the small seeds in intimate contact with the soil but does not bury them too deeply.

In the photo, Janelle is walking with the cyclone seeder. The seeder holds about 20 pounds of seed. It is hung over a shoulder. The farmer turns a small crank while walking over the area to be seeded. This simple machine does a wonderful job of casting the seeds from a spinning wheel. It covers up to a 20-foot-wide path as the farmer walks along. It is adjustable for a wide variety of seed sizes and seeding rates. The cyclone seeder was invented at least 150 years ago. Originally, they were made of canvas, wood and metal. Today they are hard plastic with a plastic bag.

A man can plant 10 acres in a day, easily. I have done it.

The second photo shows a section of 2021 hog pasture that was grazed once and then allowed to reseed itself. The yellow blossoms are canola, the white blossoms are radishes and turnips. There is also a thick understory of grasses and legumes that are not visible. Some plants grow back from root stems, some grow from seeds that did not germinate initially, some grow from seeds that the first crop developed.

Every crop is different because normal weather and timing variations favor different plant types.

The third photo shows hogs dining on mostly "regrowth grasses", from several years ago. In any case, it always works, and it always yields a delightful crop, especially if you are a pig. Best regards.

Tom



