

Leaflet A

**GOOD**

**Alfalfa and Clover Seed**

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**How to Obtain It**

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New York Agricultural Experiment Station  
Geneva, N. Y.

1912

**Questions frequently asked.** The Station receives many inquiries like these: Where can pure, high-grade alfalfa seed be purchased? **What seedsmen do you recommend** as handling alfalfa seed free from dodder? Where can I buy clover seed free from noxious weeds? Even if we were able to answer such questions satisfactorily we should not do so. It is the established policy of the Station to avoid advertising the business of any individual or firm to the detriment of others. Usually, it is best to buy from local dealers.

**Do not rely on seedsmen.** It is unsafe to rely entirely on the statements of seedsmen concerning the purity and viability of seed. Some seedsmen are careful, but many are very careless. Many seed dealers have good intentions, but are ignorant of the quality of the seeds they sell. In New York the law merely requires that seed shall be 97 per ct. pure. Much inferior seed is sold. The farmer must look out for himself.

**Buy early.** For the most satisfactory results buy seeds early because then they are usually cheaper and good seed more readily obtainable than later in the season. Also, time is needed for making purity and germination tests. Sometimes it is necessary to test several lots of seed before one is found which is fit to sow.

**Buy by  
sample.**

Seed should be bought by sample accompanied by a time limit within which the dealer agrees to furnish the same seed in bulk. Insist on having samples containing at least two ounces. The time limit should be long enough to permit sending the samples to the Experiment Station. Usually, the Station can report on samples the next day after they are received.

**Purity  
tests.**

Alfalfa and red clover seed often contain seeds of dodder and other troublesome weeds. It is also sometimes adulterated. None should be sown until pronounced dodder-free by a seed expert. **The Station will make purity tests** free of charge. Such tests are the farmers' chief safeguard against impure and adulterated seeds. Samples should contain two ounces. The postal rate on seeds (unsealed) is one cent an ounce. Address: Experiment Station, Geneva, N. Y.

**Germination  
tests.**

**The Station does not make germination tests**, but farmers should invariably make such tests themselves. Count out 100 seeds just as they run. Place them between folds of cotton flannel or similar cloth taking care that the seeds do not touch one another. Lay the cloth on a plate, moisten it well, but use no more water than the cloth will absorb, cover with another plate and keep at

a temperature of about 70°F. Each day count and remove the sprouted seeds. In from 4 to 6 days all good seeds will have sprouted. The standard germination for alfalfa and red clover seed is 85 to 90%.

**Avoid brown seed.** Alfalfa seed when plump, bright and greenish-yellow usually germinates well. Brown seed should be avoided. Brownness is an indication of age.

It is hastened by exposure to light. Shriveled, brown seeds are usually dead. Plump brown alfalfa seed, on the contrary, may germinate fairly well. Plump alfalfa seeds retain their viability for several years. Brown seeds of red clover are almost always dead.

**Concerning cheap seed.** It is poor economy to use cheap seed. Cheap seed is generally low grade seed—low in germination and foul with weed seeds. Most farmers would find it to their advantage to be less particular about the price and more particular about the quality of the seeds they sow.

**Adulteration.** In New York, the adulteration of alfalfa and clover seed is less common than it was a few years ago, but is still practiced occasionally. The principal adulterants used are the seeds of yellow trefoil and sweet clover. Only an expert can distinguish them from seeds of alfalfa and clover.