

## WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH SEAWEED

EIGHT years ago a question confronted me: Should I continue to expend certain money on the uncertain future of a large house by the sea, located on a barren hill of yellow sand, from which the soil was being excavated by frequent sea storms, pouring their heavy cataracts of water from the numerous and varied angles of a roof which, however picturesque, was yet not designed to withstand the wild coast rains?

Already huge gullies had been made in the hill sloping to the water; doors on the side of the sea were beginning to sink, and an immediate deterioration of the property threatened, unless steps could be taken at once to protect the foundations from further destruction. In the place of emerald lawns and the beautiful closely trimmed hedges for which a neighboring watering-place is famous, only these hillocks of sand, pebbles—not even rocks—with here and there a patch of coarse sea-grass. What to do? Abandon it? Let it go from bad to worse on the chance of some time selling it when the boom comes; or take the advice of an imported expert who counseled four inches of loam to be spread equally over the twenty-three-acre piece and to be planted and kept in order by his own men? This latter plan, however roseate, can be estimated at its actual practicability by statement of the fact that the railroad is nearly a mile distant, and the nearest loam deposit not less than five, with teaming at four dollars and a half a day.

Plainly, abandonment seemed the cheaper plan. Then, still debating the question, I looked out on the scene before me. Abandon this exquisite place! Surely there must be some undiscovered way of making this sand waste worthy its place in the world of beauties surrounding it.

To complicate my difficulties unusually heavy rains had that spring caused the white line of our shore to disappear, and in its place below the houses and for miles along the edges of the bay front a rank growth of goldenrod and weeds had come up through the rolling seaweed, forming almost a solid turf over the beach. To restore my beach this must be taken away, for you who live by the sea well know that a seaside place must have its sand beach or rocky shore line or it loses half its charm.

Sufficient unto the day. I had to clear my beach, and the contract, including transfer of both seaweed and sand, came to some forty odd dollars. Being of a thrifty nature, and having still a ranking sense of being taken for one kind of a fool by the expert whom I had summoned, I determined, at least in so far as a filler went, to employ it in the place of loam in stopping a bad waste between two hills.

Having first ordered the seaweed taken away and deposited in a pile at the back of the property, where the heat of the sun might ripen it into a good fertilizer and at

the same time it might not be unsightly, I then directed the teamster to dig up the sod which had formed over the old weed, and with it restore the conformation of the hill to the east and directly in front of the house. I am anticipating my finale when I tell you that over this reconstructed valley has grown, year after year, one of the most luxuriant qualities of grass ever known on these hills.

All this could not help the two-inch sag of the south door. So I called the plumbers. When in the darkness of ignorance or doubt, we call the plumber. He advised an eavespout all around the house. This seemed a reasonable necessity. The mile or more of eavespout was therefore built. But the harm had already been done. A considerable portion of my sand hill had washed into the bay, and the chance for the future seemed in favor of the bay, especially as the plumber's eavespout leaked. An ambitious project seized me. Why not bulkhead the hill? With planks placed six feet deep against the piles, a trench dug for this purpose might be filled with loam and hedges planted, while the sand taken out of the trenches could be used to regrade the hills. The roots of the hedges would in time form an extra support, and the hill would thus be restored to its original height.

This plan decided upon I laid out my lines as formally as possible, following the contours of roof and piazza lines, beginning the first year with two square enclosures directly south of the house, the center lines of hedges following on either side of the steps leading to the bay. These trenches were lined first a foot or more deep with seaweed, which prevents the loam washing through into the sandy soil beneath, then alternately loam and stable manure until the top was reached, when a thin layer of sand was filled in around the plants in order that the top soil might not cake with heavy rains. These trenches were planted with five-year-old privet, showing my eagerness and inexperience, as later attempts demonstrated that the young plants grow into a much more compact and symmetrical hedge.

While my attention was thus riveted upon the necessities of the south of the house, the sand of the driveway to the north was washing down upon the house and filling the cellarway. To meet this a gutter of asphalt was laid, reserving spaces between it and the lattice work surrounding the kitchen and pantries for the planting of vines, the construction of the gutter being facilitated by the close proximity of the beach, where a judicious sifting supplied the men with the right size of stone for lining. Preceding this work a line of hedge was planted in trenches completely around the circle of the driveway and on the hills, thus forming a wind-break and offering obstruc-

tion to further wash from the top of the hill toward the house. These trenches, like those on the south of the house and all planted subsequently, were lined in like manner with seaweed, with the sole difference that each year found a greater depth of weed, as its properties became more apparent. In the spring of this same year young plants of honeysuckle and ampilopsis were put in all around the house.

No sooner, it seemed, had the heavy rains ceased than the heat of summer was upon us, and as the burning suns of July and August dried up all delicate vegetation in the surrounding country, even the hardy privet plants seemed to wilt and grow yellow. Again the beach was deep in weed, and again I sent for the teamster, who this time distributed the cool weed along the line of the hedges, leaving always the sand clear around their roots to receive the moisture of summer showers. From the moment of this summer mulching the leaves took on a brilliant dark green color which has never left them, and in the midst of the white shore line of hills was so remarkable as to cause comment even among the old settlers.

It soon became evident to me that this same heavy mat of seaweed following the line of the driveway was accomplishing a second purpose. It had stopped all wash upon the driveway. If upon the driveway, why not upon the sandy shoulders of the hills to the south and west? Therefore in the autumn of the second year the teamster spread the entire accumulation of weed of the year upon the sand slopes, and later the following spring we planted cow-peas in the most stubborn spots. The neighbors came from far and near to ask what was growing on the slopes, as they had never seen that color of green before. The next spring one of these patches was plowed in and planted with potatoes, which yielded a great crop of fine quality and size, and the same place has been for two years now an asparagus bed supplying the house amply.

Just about this time I found the vines around the house were making slight progress in spite of loam and fertilizer in abundance, for the reason that the foundation being open underneath, the roots of the vine were exposed to the sweep of wind and weather. Heavy planking was then nailed behind the lattice trim at the base of the veranda. The vines took an immediate start, and now cover the house half way up with the same brilliant green as the hedges, the honeysuckle especially resisting all extreme of heat, cold or violent sea storms.

By the end of the fourth year we had succeeded in surrounding the house with a double row of privet hedges with enclosures of green grass between. The small rocks and stones gathered from the hills and made into piles at the top of the hills or depressions between had further stopped the rain wash, and the once white sand

hills were green and dotted with wild flowers.

The hills about the house and barren slopes to the north had been planted with Norway spruce and young native cedars, the latter taking root in the sand without the aid of loam. In the propagation of these trees seaweed again became of utmost benefit, being used heavily to mulch about the trees, thus forming for their roots a depression into which all rain water ran naturally and lodged.

The privet hedge around the vegetable garden had become so high and perfect in its growth as to enable us to grow all kinds of vegetables for the house. Not more than five loads of loam went into this garden, at least a quarter of an acre in extent, the rest being accomplished by coal and wood ashes, stable manure and seaweed.

Each summer the mulching of seaweed along the hedge took place in July until the roots had so reached up after moisture that, during one icy winter, the privet suffered badly. This brought to my attention the necessity of raking off the dry seaweed in the autumn and replacing with stable manure. Since this was done they have become more luxuriant than ever. Incidentally this dry seaweed has covered the roads where the brush which had heretofore been our only relief had worn off, and has brought to my attention a final and invaluable use for seaweed.

Up to this time the most practicable road that has been found for these hills is a thick covering of the bay and huckleberry bushes which abound, cutting them green and allowing them to dry upon the road. This, however, in time would render the surrounding country unsightly, as it must be renewed every year, and an acre of brush scarcely suffices to cover two hundred feet of roadway. Therefore in the autumn of the year we cover the roads deep in seaweed. This stops the wash from the winter rains, snows and thaws and encourages a slight growth of turf toward spring, when a light covering of brush can be put on to give that cleanliness and the russet color which is charming between the green hedges.

It is unnecessary to add that each year I am outlining new roads and paths with privet, increasing the size of vegetable gardens, planting flower gardens, also protected from the wind by hedges, and that not least among my improvements is a nursery for the propagation of privet, the cuttings being taken from the autumn clipping, placed in sand during the winter and planted in the spring. And that each year as the summer comes I am conscious of a belief that I can some day compete with the velvet lawns and hedges once apparently unattainable. And this has been accomplished through the medium of those piles of seaweed which eight years ago seemed cause for despair as I watched them driven on the beach by the south winds.