

# [Method of Preparing Seed Wheat to Prevent Smut] Arnold Shaw

**Date:** 1791/04/30

Contributors

Contributor Role

Author

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Arnold Shaw

Publication Format

Print

Type

Agriculture

Ingredients

wheat seed

water

salt

lime

Places

Newport

Hants County

Nova Scotia

**Source:** Weekly Chronicle

**Institution:** Nova Scotia Archives | **Source Origin:** Nova Scotia Newspapers on Microfilm

Description

Letter dated 8 February 1791 describing how to prepare wheat seed with a salt "pickle" to prevent smut. Vol. 5, No. 25. Microfilm Reel 8165.

Transcription

*Method of preparing Seed Wheat to prevent [Smut](#), in a Letter from Mr. Arnold Shaw of Newport, to the Secretary of the Agricultural Society for the County of Hants, dated 8th February, 1791.*

SIR,

IN compliance with the request of our society, I send you an account of the method I have for some time past pursued in preparing my wheat for seed; which is as follows---I take a bushel of my best

wheat and pour it slowly into a wide vessel nearly filled with water,\* then stir it and skim off whatever arises to the surface. The wheat being thus cleared of light grains and seeds of weeds, I pour off this water and put on fresh, leaving it to soak for twelve hours, unless in very warm weather, when ten hours will answer. After this I put the wheat into a pickle as strong as it can be made with salt dissolved in cold water; [t] in this situation I leave it twelve hours.--It is to be observed that in the above relation I am supposed to possess but one vessel, should I have more, more bushels of wheat would be under the operation at the same time. The wheat having stood in pickle for twelve hours as above, I then put it in baskets to drain for a few minutes, after this I spread it about three inches thick on a floor, sifting lime over and stirring it until each grain is coated over with lime; I then shovel it into a heap, in which situation I leave it for twenty four hours at least. It is now sufficiently prepared for sowing. Should any thing prevent its being sown for two days, I again spread and expose it to the air for about five minutes, heaping it immediately afterwards, as before; this I repeat every day until it is sown.

I have pursued this mode for eight years with the greatest success, previous to which my crops were as subject to [smut](#) as any of my neighbours. At the first time, not having any great faith in the method, from the bad success of those who had limed their seed but imperfectly, I prepared only half of my seed in this manner, the other half I sowed without any preparation; the result was that the limed seed produced a crop entirely free from [smut](#), the unprepared on the contrary, one, smutty to a great degree. The year following I intended to have limed all my seed, but at the close of my sowing (wanting some) I sowed a few ridges without previously preparing it, this produced some [smut](#), the other was entirely free from it.--Since this I have always prepared my seed in the abovementioned way, and to such effect, that there has not been the appearance of [smut](#) in any of my crops, although it prevails to a great degree in those of my neighbours.

I have the honor to be,

With my best wishes for the Society,

Your most obedient servant,

ARNOLD SHAW.

**smut**

Defined by the OED as "A fungous disease affecting various plants, esp. cereals, which are spoiled by the grain being wholly or partly converted into a blackish powder."

Method of Preparing Seed Wheat to Prevent Smut recipe from Early Modern Maritime Recipes:

<https://emmr.lib.unb.ca/recipes/122>