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Plowing is the archetypical farm work. Ground must be loosened and plants turned under in order to grow a crop. The plow comes in many shapes and sizes for various uses we put it to.

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Early November is the season for fall plowing. We are getting ground ready now to plant for next spring. All of the early crops, like onions, potatoes, beets and carrots, will have an earlier start if the soil is prepared in autumn.

Potatoes like to grow where sod has been; in other words, they are the first crop. Compost is spread thick enough to turn the field black, and then we hook up the oliver two-bottom moldboard plow. Then we notice the shares at the bottom needs replacing. Then I get frustrated because TSC only has one, the other co ops don't have any, and I don't live in a farming community anymore. You can't even get a plow bolt in RBS.

After replacing the most bent one, I slowly ease the plow in and inch forward. The sod is tough. The tractor is tougher. I plow in low range, 2nd gear, which is quite slow. I feel the structure of the soil that the sod has created isn't destroyed as much as if I went faster.

I try not to bring up the subsoil. It is the yellow clay underneath the topsoil. But where the latter is thin, the former comes up. Looks like this field could use extra compost.

Besides getting a jump on spring, turning sod over in the fall has another advantage. The breezing and thawing over the winter helps to pulverize the clods in a way no tillage can

accomplish.

The shares need to sit flat on the ground. Adjusting the top-link changes the angle. Each plow needs to go in the soil to the same depth. The right arm has a adjuster for this.

Plowman's Folly, by Edward Faulkner, came out in the 1940's and questioned the wisdom of flipping soil. The biological life in the top few inches will die if it gets smothered and buried under six inches of soil. There is truth in this, so I am very judicious in the use of the moldboard plow. I use a chisel plow most of the time because it doesn't invert the soil.

But for a tough sod, I like totally turning it in the fall. Years of cattle compaction, haying, and various plants growing on it can make for a hard, soil with lots perennial plants rooted deeply. A fall plowing does kill some life, but by spring there has been enough time for the life to grow in the soil again. And we did compost heavily, so this helps make up for the detrimental effects.

Most of our gardens are in cover crops, like crimson clover or wheat and vetch. These we will let grow up during April and then they'll be turned under in early May for the summer crops. But or spring plantings will be easier to get out if we leave the land rough-plowed.

The fields look like ocean waves, rolling ridges along the countour. A slight rebreaking, maybe some more compost, and then we can harrow it, make rows and plant. I've almost got spring fever, but I better cut some firewood first.