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You Can Build Land Back to Health -- There was a rundown and "all drug out" field up at the University's Northeast Experiment Station in Duluth and its renewal story is a powerful one. That field yielded only two bushels of barley per acre back in 1938. Today, it's back in full production. Good soil building practices, fertilizers and legumes helped bring it back.

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Surface Cultivation Helps -- Getting sod ground worked up to a good seedbed always is difficult. Alphons Kusnierek, a cooperator with the Lincoln County Soil Conservation District, finds that sod works up better and plowing is easier if he first surface cultivates with a field cultivator. He first crosses the sod both directions, cutting two inches deep. Then, he comes across again, this time cutting five inches deep. Then he plows. The seedbed is easily worked down. Working in August gives a better grass kill and is more likely to allow better sod decay before winter. This decay is important in avoiding a "nitrogen tie-up" or a poor crop.

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Terrace Talk -- April, 1933, was the date of the first terracing of a Minnesota field. It's on a farm four miles northeast of Caledonia, Houston county and it was designed to demonstrate their ability to stop soil washing, prevent gullies and save moisture. Then, they were much higher and narrower than today's broad-based terrace. Because their shape made field operations hard, the field was in alfalfa much of the time. Corn was planted only rarely in the next few years. The original owner of the farm says, "That field was so badly gullied that we had to do handwork with a shovel before we could even start building terraces. But, terraces saved it." Twenty years later, the present owners, McCormick Brothers, give their terraces credit for more than just soil and water control. They say that because a whole field can be in the same crop, pasture problems are solved and far less fencing is necessary.

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Farm and Home Week -- January 11 through 14 is Farm and Home Week at the University of Minnesota in St. Paul. Lots of good land use talks from leading specialists.