Plants for saltland : samphire

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Department of Agriculture, Western Australia (1964) "Plants for saltland : samphire," Journal of the Department of Agriculture, Western Australia, Series 4: Vol. 5 : No. 6 , Article 4.
Available at: https://researchlibrary.agric.wa.gov.au/journal_agriculture4/vol5/iss6/4

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SAMPHIRE . . .
Well Worth Encouraging

THE photograph shows two bushes of "samphire" (mainly Arthrocnemum spp.).

This common name is ascribed to several plants, all of which occur naturally in the agricultural areas in Western Australia. They are all extremely salt tolerant and usually grow on land bordering salt lakes or channels.

The samphires produce an enormous amount of seed which is usually shed in autumn. The experience of many farmers, who have fenced salt areas and excluded stock, is that samphire is able to spread rapidly over large areas of the worst saltland. Subsequently stock may be turned in for set periods, preferably in autumn, and providing care is exercised the bushes will survive moderate grazing and stock will benefit considerably provided they also have access to dry feed.

Analysis of samphire shows that it has a high protein content (around 20 per cent.). It is also high in salt and sheep grazing it need good quality water.

Seed of samphire is not available at present but in many cases the bush will voluntarily spread over saltland if given a chance. Examples are known at Miling, Bolgart, and Moulyinning where large areas of bare saltland have become covered with samphire following grazing protection. The area at Moulyinning covers about 2,000 acres and is now providing excellent grazing in conjunction with dry grass.