Growing Good Potatoes in the Pacific Northwest

Some Ideas on the Homely "Spud" by Men Who Know Whereof They Write.

This is the first of a series of articles discussing potato growing.

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IN THE United States as a whole the potato crop ranks sixth in value. Notwithstanding this fact, we imported from foreign countries over 13,000,000 bushels in 1912.

In view of the latter fact and the magnitude of the industry, and also in view of the number of problems connected with the industry, it would seem that every aid possible should be given to it.

Few of our agricultural crops involve more complex problems and call for greater exercise of care and judgment, if the crop is to be grown profitably and kept from from fungous and insect pests.

It is desired to call special attention to the fact that several serious potato pests are just entering the state for the first time. They should be attacked relentlessly. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Soil Conditions Needed.

The potato requires a rich, mellow, loam soil for its best development. Splendid crops are frequently grown on sandy and heavy clay soils. The sandy loams produce smooth, even potatoes with bright skin and shallow eyes and usually mature the crop at an earlier date than the heavier loams.

The heavy loams tend to produce large vines of late maturity and tubers of rather rough, irregular form, with deep eyes and poor quality. A good humus content is necessary for the best production. The vegetation in the soil should be in an advanced stage of decay.

Soil that contains a large amount of vegetation just entering the process of decay is not suitable for potato growing and should be devoted to some other crop for one or two years before planting to potatoes. The subsoil may be heavier than the surface soil, and sandy or medium loams underlaid with clay or even gravel as another extreme, can be made to produce excellent crops.

Drainage is Required.

The soil devoted to potato crops should be well drained. The surface should have slope enough to admit of good surface drainage so that the water will never stand in pools or fail to run off in case of excessive rainfall. The subsoil should be of such a character that gives good drainage, or tile drains should be used and well distributed so that any excessive moisture will be carried away.

Potatoes can not be grown satisfactorily in soil that contains an excess of moisture.

Land that is especially subject to late spring or early fall frosts is not well adapted to potato culture. The vines are frost tender and must make a good growth in the spring before the hot summer weather comes on.

They endure cool nights well, but for the best development should have a great deal of sunshine. They are especially subject to disease during cloudy, moist weather.

Preparing the Land.

The land should be cultivated until it is mellow and of a rather open or porous character. This condition can best be obtained by rotating the potato crop with other field crops. Land can be used for potatoes for two years successfully, but it is ordinarily the best plan to devote the land to some other crop the third year.

For the third year of this rotation some crop should be chosen that will turn into the soil a large amount of vegetation. The old potato growing sections of the United States have found it greatly to their advantage to use a four or five year rotation, growing clover, alfalfa, field peas, or some similar crop on the land for one or two years, and turning under a large amount of vegetation, and then devoting the land to some cultivated crop for one year and then to potatoes for one or two years.

This process is one of the most successful in eliminating diseases, and reduces to a minimum the effect and expense of maintaining the soil fertility. The soil should be mellow and in good friable condition to a depth of seven or eight inches just previous to planting, but if fall plowing has been done, it will seldom be necessary to do more than a surface tillage.

Planting Suggestions.

For an early crop the planting should be done as soon as the land can be worked and the potatoes grown without danger of frost. A very common practice is to plant early so that the plants will reach the surface of the soil as danger of frost is past.

Very light frosts will sometimes do no harm to the potatoes and even heavier ones will only nip back the foilage without killing the entire plant. However, frost usually retards the growth and development of the plant, and early maturity is seldom gained by extremely early planting. For the late crop in the sections having long growing periods, the planting can be done as late as June. It is usually advisable to plant early enough so the plants will have ample time to mature and die before frost.

If an abundant moisture supply is present, the vines may continue to grow until frost without regard to the date of planting. In such sections, mid-season and early planting is to be preferred. The first killing frosts will usually be followed by enough warm weather to allow the potatoes to ripen before there is any necessity for digging.

Depth of Planting.

In light, sandy soils it is advisable to plant the potatoes more shallow than in heavy soils. Soils that warm slowly in the spring also usually produce better crops, if the planting is shallow. This varies also with varieties and systems of tillage and field work. In irrigated sections, it is more common to plant shallow than in the non-irrigated sections. Local practice should be taken as the best indication of what should be done in each section.

For large areas, mechanical planters are usually to be preferred to hand planting. The stand of plants obtained is more uniform because of more regular placing of the seed. The work is easier and cheaper done by machinery and the entire field can be planted in much shorter time. There are two types of mechanical planters in general use, called the picker planters and non-picker planters. The picker planter is a complete machine within itself and picks out of a hopper each individual piece and drops one piece at a time. The non-picker planter depends upon a man for placing the piece of potato in a plate or chute, from which it is dropped by mechanical means into the furrow below. The non-picker type does not bruise or mangle the seed, but it requires an additional man to do the work and is liable to give an uneven stand unless the man at the hopper is very quick and accurate in his work.

Seeding Stump Grass To Pasture

THE custom of seeding freshly cleared stump land to pasture has not been very widely practiced in many parts of the country. However, the plan is gaining foothold rapidly. The method used is to pulverize the ground quite thoroughly with the disk if the ground is not too turfy, the breaking plow if it is, and sow about half bushel of rye, two pounds of rape seed, three pounds of timothy, three pounds of red top, two pounds of alsike and four pounds of clover to the acre. The rye is sown first so as to get it thoroughly covered by the disking, then harrow the ground down smoothly and sow the grass seed and the rape and re-harrow. It will make an excellent hog pasture and develop into a permanent stand of grass for future years.

The proportions of the seed could be varied according to conditions of the land, as red top and aslike clover are better adapted to wet land than are the timothy and red clover. The rye and rape will furnish pasture until the other grasses are securely rooted.

The Joke is On The Editor, Surely

"A Joke on Pullman" About a Piece of "Ambergris" Turns Out No Joke, for "Ambergris" Was not Ambergris After All.

A WEEK or so ago the Home and Farm Magazine printed an item about an examination having been made by experts at Pullman, headquarters of the Washington Agricultural College, of an alleged piece of ambergris.

The officials declared that the find was not ambergris.

The owner, however, sent a specimen to Germany and he was informed it was ambergris.

This looked like a good joke on the officials and an item was printed, headed: "A JOKE ON PULLMAN."

Since the publication of the item in question, the Department of Chemistry experts at Pullman have been upheld by perhaps the leading ambergris exporters in the United States, and they have so advised the editor.

It seems as if the joke were rather on the editor than on Pullman. Perhaps the joke also is on the owner of the "ambergris."

Anyway, here is the little item, that caused the trouble:

A JOKE ON PULLMAN.

Five months ago Leonard Dixon, a young rancher living near East Sound, Orcas Island, found a queer appearing mass in the water near this place. He thought it might be ambergris, so sent a sample to the Washington State College at Pullman for analysis. It was returned with the report that the professors there did not know what it was. Some weeks later a member of the Arctic Club, Seattle, who knew of the find, took a sample to Germany, and now a letter has come to Mr. Dixon stating that the substance is ambergis and asking for information as to the quantity of the find.

In the meantime Dixon had abandoned the idea that it was ambergris and used a part of the substance as skid grease and found it excellent for this purpurse. The ambergris is said to be valued at from $16 to $20 an ounce, making it highly expensive as skid grease.

The ambergris was found off what is known as Agate Beach, a favorite place for summer visitors on Orcas Island, and is supposed to have been washed in from the Gulf of Georgia.

And here is a letter the editor received from Professor Elton Fulmer, head of the Department of Chemistry at Pullman and State Chemist of the State of Washington:

"Sometime ago there appeared in your publication a brief article headed, 'A Joke on Pullman.' The statement in this article that we had examined a sample of the material and pronounced it not to be ambergris was a correct one.

"Upon reading in the above mentioned article that a sample of the above substance had been taken to Germany and there pronounced to be ambergris, we sent the sample upon which we had passed judgment to the Fries Brothers of New York City, who in turn submitted it to a firm of exporters and importers of musk, ambergris, and similar substances, namely: The George Leuders & Company. They are undoubtedly qualified to pass upon such materials as ambergris.

"We have just received a communication from them, from which I quote you as follows:

"'While we cannot say what the material submitted may be we can state positively that it is not ambergris. It has not the appearance of ambergris, nor the character of ambergris, nor the characteristics, much less the scent. We will also add that ambergris to our knowledge has not been found on the Pacific Coast.'

"It thus appears that our judgment in the case was correct and I trust that you will give this communication as much publicity as was afforded "The Joke on Pullman."

ELTON FULMER,
Head of Department of Chemistry.

And if we have not eaten "crow" enough, we shall say right here that the "next time"—but there won't be any next time—we shall not try and pit our editorial wit against Pullman wisdow.

Billion Needed To Improve Roads

THERE are 2,200,000 miles of public roads in the United States, of which approximately one-tenth have been improved by grinding, draining and hard surfacing. The remaining 2,000,000 miles cannot be made into such improved highways all at once. At a minimum of $5,000 a mile, the total cost would be $10,000,000,000. The common-sence solution of the problem, which has been suggested, is that the burden be divided between the National Government, the state, county and township, along logical lines, the Federal Government to lend its aid and supervision to the great interstate and transcontinental routes that connect principal cities and state capitals, the state to improve and maintain its main roads linking up the county seats and extending to the state line; the country to have charge of tributary market roads, and the township to shape up and drag the earth roads leading from the farm to the nearest gravel, sand-clay or other county market road.

The roads that are most traveled should be improved first and in the most substantial way. In many states 80 to 90 per cent of the total travel is carried by 15 to 20 per cent of the road mileage, so the largest number of inhabitants are benefited by the permanent improvement of these main roads. The farmer who lives a mile from a main road and five miles from market gets more benefit from the improvement of the main road than he would from the improvement of the road past his door.

The shackleford post road bill in Congress can accomplish great good if enacted, after being amended so that the federal appropriations will go to the state highway commissions of the various states, instead of being parceled out in insignificant amounts to local road authorities in congressional districts. Expenditures of Government funds upon the interstate routes will relieve the state and counties of this burden, so that they can devote their funds to the shorter market roads and tributaries.

The Michigan State Suffrage Association has indorsed a state system of retirement salaries for teachers.

In rural schools in Missouri, girls are organized into "pick and shovel clubs" under the auspices of the National Congress of Mothers.

The most popular feminine Christian name is France is Mary.

Miss Fern Hobbs, private secretary to Governor West, of Oregon, is being mentioned as a candidate for the governorship.

London society women have adopted the new fad set by Mrs. Abdey, of York Place, Marylebone, and are having their backs photographed—a la nature, as it were.

Cuts that Print
Half-tones · Etchings · Art Work
PROMPT SERVICE
ALL WORK GUARANTEED
ART ENGRAVING CO
TIMES BLDG · SEATTLE