

Potato Growing in Idaho

By E. F. Stephens in "The Rural Spirit"

IN the year 1912 the potato market of the United States was overcrowded, with the result that under former methods of marketing prices in Idaho ruled low. This led to the formation of an association as a branch of the North Pacific Distributors' Association. John U. McPherson and his assistants are actively engaged in the formation of local branches tributary to the chief association and in the development of better methods of marketing.

Before the next potato crop is ready to market, there will be forty-eight large storage cellars along the line of the Oregon Short Line, enabling the growers to store a considerable portion of the crop in these convenient places ready for loading out and shipping, as markets can be found and cars secured.

Grading machinery, run by electric power, will be installed in these cellars. The potatoes will be accurately sized, classified and graded. The bulk of the crop will be marketed in three grades. A composite variety now called the Idaho Rural, leads in productiveness, followed by Netted Gem and others. One grade is called the Blue Tag Grade. This comprises potatoes sound, clean, with not more than 5 per cent of irregularity in size and shape, no second growth, and only one variety in a sack. These will be marketed in sacks weighing 150 pounds. The market now calls for uniformity in size of sack.

Hotel Trade.

An extra fancy grade of large potatoes with shallow eyes and good surface, will be selected for high-class hotel trade. An effort is being made to market an especially choice grade of white potatoes, very even in size and form, in boxes. A certain class of trade will even pay the cost of wrapping these potatoes in paper. These boxed and wrapped potatoes at this time are selling at from 80 cents to 85 cents per box. The Panama trade uses boxed and wrapped potatoes.

In the opinion of Eugene Grubb, a noted potato authority, Southern Idaho is one of the most favored potato raising sections in the world. The possibility of growing very large crops in this district is indicated by the fact that more than 45,000 pounds of potatoes have been grown on one acre.

W. D. Gilmore of Payette, Idaho, in the year 1913 grew 753 bushels and 39½ pounds on a carefully measured acre. Four responsible people helped to dig, measure, weigh and certify to the correctness of this yield.

Large Crops.

Crops of 200 to 300 sacks of potatoes are quite frequently secured where rotation of crop, selection of seed and methods of culture have been such as skilled experience advises.

In Southeastern Idaho some farmers cultivate a large acreage. Beasley Brothers of Idaho Falls annually grow 800 acres. Other parties grow potatoes by the hundreds of acres, but perhaps a majority of the growers cultivate ten to thirty acres. Beasley Brothers have, by carefully kept accounts, demonstrated that, where methods of rotation are such as to support the largest yield per acre, using selected seed and with up-to-date machinery, it is possible to grow potatoes and haul them two miles to the station at a total cost of 35 cents per 100 pounds.

To guard against disease, rotation of crop is essential. Grain, one year, alfalfa, two or three years, then potatoes one year. In the sugar beet growing district this may be followed by beets one season. By not growing potatoes on the same land in a rotation of four or five years the crop is kept free from disease. The fertility of the soil also must be maintained. A large amount of vegetable matter secured by turning under alfalfa has proven to be an essential factor in securing the most profitable crops.

Failure.

The locality around Greeley, Colo., formerly shipped ten to twelve thou-

sand cars of potatoes annually. The crop of 1913 in the district about Greeley has fallen to 1800 cars. The cause: Disease crept in by lack of suitable rotation and maintenance of soil fertility.

The most skillful potato growers send men with forks through their potato fields, selecting by appearance the most promising hills, judging by the vines. If the hills develop ten to fifteen potatoes, most of them of good average size, with shallow eyes, and no evidence of disease, the better potatoes from that hill are saved for seed, but if the yield turns up a dozen potatoes of which a considerable portion are small or otherwise defective, no seed is selected from that hill. Each up-to-date grower has a seed plot, in which he grows the finest possible potatoes for seed purposes. Each year he selects the very best from this plot for growing seed for his general field and his next year's seed. With this extra select seed, saved from year to year, and planted on the most favorable soil, it has been found possible to lessen the depth of the eyes, to improve size and quality, and to largely increase the yield per acre. If potatoes are very abundant, some plant whole seed, which gives an increased yield. The more usual method, however, is to cut the potato, some planting no more than two eyes.

Rotation Pays.

The ground is very carefully prepared. A fine, deep seed bed is required. The crop is usually planted with a planter. After planting, it should be harrowed repeatedly to maintain a clean, mellow surface, until the tops are above ground, when cultivation follows. Then water is needed to maintain a moist condition of the soil. Do not overwater, nor irrigate too late. Cultivate after each irrigation to maintain a loose open surface.

Suitable rotation of crop, careful selection of seed from year to year, coupled with suitable cultivation and irrigation, has increased the yield on the farms of the most careful growers from 125 bushels per acre, up to 350 bushels per acre, with occasional yields running far above this. Highest yields have been secured from the composite variety called Idaho Rural, followed by Netted Gem. The Early Ohio and Eureka are planted for early potatoes.

Since the railroads cannot be expected to supply a sufficient number of cars to move the potato crop directly from the field, the association will make special effort this season to develop large storage cellars suitable for handling half the crop. In cellar storage, grading can be carried on all winter, and by lining the cars with paper and straw, potatoes can be shipped safely during the winter period. The shipping association endeavors to distribute the crop very widely and to reach markets not heretofore supplied with Idaho potatoes.

Hardy azaleas and rhododendrons planted this year should not be permitted to suffer for want of water. They can hardly have too much. A top dressing of manure will be beneficial.

THE MOTHER OF BEARDED MEN.

I am the mother of bearded men, and the names that I called them by
When I watched their sleep in their cradles, and hushed each tear and sigh,
Are known and spoken where men meet
men, and life moves swift along,
For they do their share of the world's work, and they are sure and strong.

Clear are their eyes and their glances kind,
as when their years were few;
Deep voices call me mother, and the tones
are gentle and true;
They give me love and honor, thought they
are wiser now than I,
But I think of the little children who slept
in my arms and I sigh.

Oh, I could not hold them dearer, and I
would not turn them back
To wander again through life's thorny maze,
and again to climb its track,
But when the lonely evening comes, and
no one has need of me,
It's Oh, for the little children who once
leaned upon my knee!

—NINETTE M. LOWATER, in New York Sun.

PRUNING BLACKBERRIES AND RASPBERRIES.

ACCORDING to Prof. W. J. Wright, New York School of Agriculture, black raspberries should be permitted to grow only the fine strongest new canes. Cut out the tops of new canes when they are thirty inches high. Cut out and burn all old canes immediately after fruiting. If the branches of the new canes grow longer than 20 to 24 inches, cut them back to 18 inches early in the spring.

Red raspberries have a tendency to throw up a larger number of new canes than black raspberries, and often some distance from the parent plant. Cutting off the ends of new canes in midsummer increases this tendency. As the ends of red raspberries are often killed back during the winter, it is best not to cut them back until the following spring.

The pruning schedule for red raspberries is keeping down all new canes except the five or six strongest ones in the vicinity of the parent plant. Cut out and burn all canes as soon as they are through fruiting. Cut back all canes to about 36 inches early in the spring and shorten the lateral branches if they have made a large growth, to about 18 inches.

PURSUES ORCHARD STUDY.

HARRY HETZEL, an O. A. C. honor student, who was appointed last year to an instructorship in horticulture in Iowa State College, has received substantial advancement in his work. He is spending the summer studying the orchards of Ohio, New York and other leading fruit states of the Eastern United States, in preparation for still more useful and profitable service. In this extraneous duty he is following the O. A. C. tradition that practical studies begin rather than end with commencement.

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References: R. L. Gillespie, M. D.; B. L. Norden, M. D.; S. E. Josephi, M. D.

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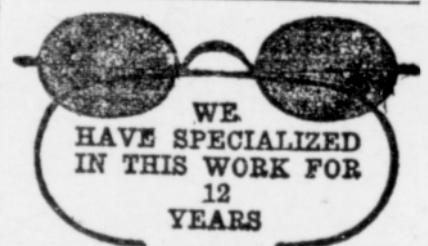
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