Uncle Sam's Free Garden Seeds

THIS spring about 13,000,000 Americans received free packages of vegetable and garden seeds from their senators and representatives in congress. Uncle Sam—not the member of congress—bought the seeds, tied up the packages, put them in the mail and carried them free to every nook and corner of the land. Of course, in the last analysis, the people themselves—though they apparently got something for nothing, paid for these seeds, since the cost of the purchase and distribution came out of the public funds.

Doubtless this seed business all seems peaceable enough to the voter who gets the seeds, but, goodness, he should be in Washington when the annual flurry over these same seeds is on! It's really as exciting as a two-ring circus, for there are two seed flurries going on at one and the same time.

One flurry is going on at Uncle Sam's seed warehouse, where a small army of girls is doing up the seeds and pasting on the franks of the members of congress and hustling the packages off to the mails.

The other flurry is in the capitol, where congress is fighting tooth and toenail over the question of whether it will distribute seeds again next spring. You see, Uncle Sam's fiscal year begins July 1 each year and he has to make a seed appropriation a year in advance—or no seeds. So this spring, while congress was fighting out the same old fight on seeds for 1923, the 1922 distribution of seeds was going merrily on under an appropriation made after a prolonged fight in the spring of 1921.

The fight over the seed distribution usually runs about like this: The appropriations committee reports the agricultural department appropriation bill without the seed item. Some "seed man" offers a seed amendment. The antis object to the amendment on a point of order. If the speaker rules against the seeds the house overrules him. Then the bill goes to the senate and the senate throws out the seed amendment. The bill then goes to conference and the senate and house wrangle over the seed item—with other items—until an agreement is reached. It's like a game of poker—bluff and raise. And of course there's always a show-down—for the agricultural appropriation bill must be passed, seeds or no seeds.

This year the fight was unusually prolonged, but as usual the seed men in the house had their way. The agricultural bill carrying $36,900,000 contained an item of $360,000 for the free distribution of seeds in 1923.

In the course of the house debate this spring Representative Bill G. Lowrey of Mississippi, a "seed man," read into the Congressional Record an interesting article on Uncle Sam's seed distribution from the Washington Sunday Star. Here are some of the points brought out in the article:

At a cost of $360,000 food products to the value of $130,000,000 will be grown from 100,000 packages of vegetable seeds and 10,000 packages of flower seeds which are being sent out from Washington by each and every one of the 96 senators and 435 members of the house under 13,000,000 franks (free postage) to home gardeners in every State in the Union.

Now, let us look over the historical background for this annual "graft." The purchase of seeds and plants by the government may be said to date back to colonial days. As early as 1743 the British parliament granted $600,000 to promote the cultivation of indigo and other crops in the American colonies, and the assemblies of the various colonies appropriated small sums from time to time to encourage the cultivation of plants new to the country, such as hops in Virginia, mulberry trees for silk culture in Georgia, and vineyards for the establishment of an American wine industry.

In 1839, through the efforts of Henry L. Ellsworth, commissioner of patents, an appropriation of $1,000 was made for the purpose of collecting and distributing seeds, prosecuting agricultural investigations, and procuring agricultural statistics, with which 30,000 packages of seeds were purchased and distributed. This appropriation marked the beginning of the Department of Agriculture.

Demands upon members of congress for seeds became so numerous and insistent that it was impossible to fill the orders with new varieties of seeds. The practice of sending out larger and larger quantities of vegetable seeds thus developed.

During the years from 1839 to 1863 practically the entire seed appropriation was expended for standard varieties of vegetable and flower seeds. In 1894 a change was advocated and action taken to discontinue the customary distribution. This action was not approved by congress, which in an act approved April 25, 1896, changed the wording of the previous act. The attorney general, to whom the question was submitted for decision, held that the purchase and distribution of seeds, including vegetable and flower seeds, were mandatory and left the secretary of agriculture without discretion. Congress has specifically reserved for itself the distribution, with proportionate allotments to each member, of five-sixths of all the seeds and plants purchased by the department. So that is where "congressional seed distribution" originated.

Now, then, it costs Uncle Sam about 3½ cents for every package of seeds sent out by a congressman. Each package contains five different kinds of seed. The following kinds of vegetable seeds are purchased for free distribution: Peas, beets, lettuce, onions, radish, beans, corn, carrots, cucumber, parsley, parsnip, squash, tomato, turnip and watermelon. There are 14 combinations, so that a member of congress can select the five different kinds of seeds he wants to send out in one package. Similarly there are 22 different varieties of flowers, such as chrysanthemum, aster, cosmos, balsam, candytuft, dianthus, nasturtium, poppy, sweet peas, petunia, zinnias, mignonette.

That package containing five small papers of seeds, which costs the government 3½ cents, if bought in the open market would cost 50 cents.

The office of seed distribution in the Department of Agriculture keeps an exact account for each member of congress, just the same as a bank account. The member is credited with his quota and is allowed to draw against that quota, just the same as against a bank account.

From one sample package, containing five small papers of seeds, any person can raise at least $10 worth of food, according to the agricultural authorities. Deducting $5 for waste, loss in transit, or carelessness in planting or poor soil, it leaves a $10 net production. Members of congress are sending out this year 13,000,000 of these large packages (five papers in each), which, it is conservatively estimated, will return $130,000,000 food products for an outlay of $360,000, which certainly should have some effect on the economic life of this country.

When the annual fight over the appropriation is being waged the claim is often made that the free-seed distribution comes near wrecking the Post Office department and is responsible for an annual deficit. The records show that the run is usually from 1,700,000 pounds to 600,000 or 700,000 pounds, and that if the office of seed distribution paid postage on each package, the same as any private individual, the postage bill would never have been more than $131,000, and that it would average about $85,000.

Every seed sent out is tested for vitality and for trueness to name. These tests are made on the experimental farm of the department near Arlington National cemetery, although the germination tests are mostly made in the laboratory by using blotter paper. All seed has to be of the particular variety ordered. The department while opposing the congressional distribution, takes very good care that the seeds are all good before they are sent out. It sets a very high standard to which the seeds must register, a much higher standard than is often required commercially. If the seeds do not reach that standard, they are shipped back to the contractor from whom they were purchased at the latter's expense. Some years they reject a very large amount—this year, for example, about 150,000 pounds, after it had reached Washington—because the germination was not high enough. This is sent back as not good enough for congressional seed distribution, but there is no assurance anywhere that the very same seed is not disposed of commercially.

Uncle Sam buys these seeds on straight competitive bids, and when any contractor's deliveries show a consistent poor germination he is blacklisted. Each bidder is informed why he did not get the contract, told who did get it and why and the price paid. This is a straight official letter.

Congressmen are coming more and more to send their quotas of seeds out, not to the voting lists in their districts but to the school children, to civic organizations, chambers of commerce, banks, and factories for workmen, and a great deal to miners.

With the department opposed to the congressional seed distribution, and with congress habitually for it, Oliver F. Jones, originally from Cincinnati, who is in active charge of this work, has had an unenviable job as buffer between the department and congress for about twenty years. He probably knows all the members of congress more intimately than any other man in Washington, because he is calling upon them in their offices every day in the year. At present he is getting more than 200 telephone calls a day from them, dictates about 100 letters a day to them, and has 20 or 30 of them calling on him in his office each day.

The seed distribution is conducted under the bureau of plant industry, of which Dr. William A. Taylor is chief. R. A. Oakley and J. E. W. Tracy purchase under contract all the seed that enters into the congressional distribution and supervise the mechanical and physical work of filling the packages and mailing them. Mr. Tracy is in charge of the seed warehouse, located at 339 Pennsylvania avenue, which is not at all modern, well ventilated or lighted. This building was erected in 1884 and was the scene of receptions, banquets and inaugural balls for Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren and Abraham Lincoln. This is not a government-owned building, but has been rented by the department and used as a seed warehouse for about ten years.

The filling of the orders of congressmen is an interesting part of the free-seed distribution. The members supply their franks in sheets of ten. They are cut up into single slips and counted into bundles by expert counters from the bureau of engraving and printing. As a member sends in an order a blue slip is made out calling upon the seed warehouse to deliver that quantity, and this is accompanied by the corresponding number of franks. The seed packages are either sent to the office of the member of congress, if the franks are not addressed, or are mailed out directly from the seed warehouse if they are addressed.

These franks are now coming in at the rate of 300,000 or 300,000 a day. Each member is entitled to 20,000 packages of vegetable seeds and 2,000 packages of flower seeds. As each of these packages contains five small papers of seeds, it really means that 110,000 papers of seeds are sent out by each member of the senate and house.

The way in which these seeds are first put into the small papers and sealed and then put one each of five different kinds into a larger package and sealed, with the member's frank pasted on each package for direct mailing, is an interesting part of the congressional distribution system. This is done by contract, and this year a new contractor is on the job. Frank Clarke of Waco, Tex., who has speeded up the work by devising a new gluing machine.

The seed envelopes are filled by machinery which automatically weighs the contents of each envelope. Two girls work at one of these machines, one filling and the other sealing the little envelopes on a revolving belt. Filling and sealing 16,000 of these little envelopes is considered a good day's work. The girls get piecework over 20,000 a day.

Other girls sit at big tables pasting the congressional franks onto the container on which are printed the names of the five varieties of vegetables or flowers that are to be placed within. A belt carrier runs beside huge bins into which the small packages of seeds have been dumped. As the girls finish pasting the franks on the big envelopes they are carried, one at a time, along this traveling belt roadway and in front of a boy at regular intervals are girls, each of whom slips in a small envelope, and the container proceeds to an inspector and then past another girl, who seals up the package by machinery.

This is your corner. Make use of it for your information on questions that are puzzling you. It will be my pleasure and privilege to answer carefully and promptly all questions submitted to me. If a more detailed answer than can be given in these columns is desired, send a stamped envelope and it will be given prompt attention. All communications will always be held in absolute confidence.

All letters should be addressed very plainly in pen and ink to Helen Brooks, Box 1545, Salt Lake City.

Helen Brooks

Dear Miss Brooks:

Will you please tell me if a man should offer his hand to a women when he is introduced to her? Why is rice thrown after a bride? Why is a teacup usually given to the engaged girl? Should an engaged girl embroider her linens with her own initials or the initials of her married name? Should a girl accept a costly present from a boy to whom she is engaged?

MARGIE.

The custom of throwing rice after the newly married couple is a very old one, and the meaning is not far to seek. As rice is the most prolific of grains, it has always and everywhere been regarded as emblematic of God's command to Adam and Eve, and also to Noah after the flood, to "increase and multiply and replenish the earth." In India, among the Brahmins, rice throwing is a part of the marriage ceremony. The Jews throw wheat instead of rice, and the Russians oats or barley upon the heads of the bridal couple, saying "Increase and multiply."

I have looked up a number of authorities and find nothing in regard to the giving of a teacup to an engaged girl, so am unable to help you on this. An old English custom was to carry the bridal cup before the bride on returning from the church, to prevent evil, which may possibly have some bearing on this.

The linens for the trousseau, or presents for the bride, are always marked with the initials of the bride's maiden name; never with the initials of her married name.

It is not advisable for presents of considerable value to be given or received between the engaged couple during the engagement, with the exception of the engagement ring. It is perfectly proper and correct to accept flowers, books, or candy, but nothing in the way of wearing apparel, except perhaps gloves. It is the woman's prerogative to offer her hand upon receiving an introduction—not the man's. In the case of a hostess, where she wishes to show cordiality and welcome, it is well for her to offer her hand. In formal society none but hostesses offer their hand upon receiving an introduction, but on informal occasions it is quite correct to do so if one wishes.

Dear Miss Brooks:

You have helped so many that I feel as though you might be able to decide a matter which has been worrying me. Sometime ago I met a young man to whom I took a great liking, but upon mentioning his name to several of my acquaintances they told me not to have anything to do with him as his character was questionable. After several years of absence he returned to this state and called on me, and I introduced him to my parents who apparently liked him as much as I. Is the friendship of one person worth the risk of losing the friendship of many? Thanking you in advance for your kindness.

JUNE, Spanish Fork, Utah.

It would seem to me that if you had known of this young man for several years you should be able to determine for yourself as to his character. I am inclined to think you would not lose as many friends as you seem to think by retaining his friendship. I am taking it for granted, of course, that you would not care for him if he proved to be of the character your friends have pictured to you, but they would have to prove to me by what authority they were judging him. As for taking the risk you mention, it would depend entirely on what your young man friend proved himself to be. I hope I have been of assistance to you.

Dear Miss Brooks:

I am going to try to join your happy corner. I have had a good many friends ask me how to get grease spots out of serge that fades. I am very anxious to know and I am hoping you can help me out.

V. L., Soda Springs, Idaho.

I am very glad to welcome you to my corner and believe I can help you out of your difficulty. Place the grease spot between two pieces of blotting paper and then put a warm (not hot) iron over the spot and let it remain a few minutes. Repeat this operation as many times as it takes to entirely remove the grease spot, always using fresh blotting paper.

Dear Miss Brooks:

I have heard about your corner and that you would answer any question that was asked of you. Will you please answer this? In my Bee Hive work I have chosen the name "Red Tulip." Would you please tell me all you can about its meaning and history? Thanking you in advance, I am, very truly,

M. P., Lyman, Wyo.

The Garden Tulip (Tulipa Gesneriana) has been in cultivation for many years. Holland is still the center of tulip cultivation, though attempts have been made to raise bulbs for the market in the United States. The "Rose" variety of tulips is composed of many different shades of red—variegated rose pink shades, and red or scarlet flowers. Most of these occur in both single and double forms. In the year 1634 Holland was seized with a mania for acquiring or growing tulips and bulbs were sold and resold in markets in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and other cities, at fabulous prices. This ruinous speculation was finally ended by governmental interference, but Holland is still noted for her tulips. The tulip, any color, signifies "charity" in the language of flowers, so you have chosen a very lovely symbol, my dear.

Dear Miss Brooks:

I am a reader of your corner and am wondering if you could help me. I love to write stories but I don't know where to get copyright for them. My school teacher advised me to get one as she thinks I can make good writing stories. Hoping you can give me the information I so much need, I remain, your friend,

Constance P., Carter, Wyo.

If you will write to the Register of Copyrights, Washington, D. C., asking for information as to what steps to take to secure a copyright, they will tell you just what you should do. I hope this will be the means of your obtaining the information you need.

Dear Miss Brooks:

If you were angry at your friends and did not want to make up and they came up and put their arms around you and started to talk, what would you do?

If I were the sort who gets angry and never forgives, I suppose I would not listen to them; but one cannot afford to stay angry, can one? I believe I would try to listen and forgive if possible. You will not regret it, I am sure.

Dear Friend:

I'm a girl nearing sixteen and am keeping company with a young man of nineteen. He hasn't much pride about his clothes. What could I say so that he would improve, but not hurt his feelings? Another question: Do you think it shows bad character to go to a dance swimming with a boy? Of course other people are there.

CUTENESS, Garden Valley, Idaho.

It is rather a delicate subject, that of criticising others' clothes, but I would suggest that you call his attention to boys who are neatly dressed and immaculate in their appearance. Some would take it very gracefully and profit thereby if you suggested certain things that would improve their appearance, but you must be the judge as to whether it would be wise in this case. It is perfectly proper for you to go to the plunge with your boy friend. It is being done all over the world at beaches and resorts.

Dear Miss Brooks:

I am troubled very much with "hang nails." What can I do for them? What is one of the best kinds of powder? What is powder made of? Is [illegible] a good powder?

LA RENA, Rigby, Idaho.

You should buy a good cuticle softener and apply as directed. Push the cuticle down very carefully each time after washing the hands and if you are persistent in this simple treatment I am sure you will see a great improvement. If you prefer, instead of the cuticle softener you may use [illegible] as I have been told that this is very good for this purpose. Use just the same as you would the other. There are so very many kinds of powder that I would hesitate to name any particular one. By trying a few different kinds you will undoubtedly find one which seems to meet the requirements of your skin more than another. It is much the better plan to find the one that is especially adapted to your particular skin. I could not tell you what powder is made of. I have been unable to find the kind you mention in the stores here, so could not say as to its quality.

Dear Miss Brooks:

I have been very much interested in your corner and am now taking the liberty of asking a question. I would like to get the history of the Sego Lily (Utah State Flower.) Also, please tell me how I could work out a pattern from the Sego Lily that would do for embroidering dresses, curtains, and the like. Wishing you success in your work, I remain,

WAITING, La Sal, Utah.

Thank you for letting me know you are interested in my corner, and hope you will take the liberty of coming often. By sending your goods in to one of the larger department stores you could have it stamped with the Sego Lily design but it would make it rather expensive for you. I find no place where they have the pattern for sale. The only other plan I could suggest would be to find someone artistically inclined and get them to draw a design which you could transfer onto your goods. The following is the history I find of the Sego Lily: Utah's floral queen belongs to the tulip branch of the Lily family. It has a remarkable list of relatives, good, bad and indifferent, close and distant. The Sego Lily is a variety of the Mariposa Tulip. The flowers usually follow individual taste in coloring, and wear a wide range of the prettiest gowns imaginable. Mariposa in Spanish means "butterfly" and the members of the Mariposa group of flowers to which the Sego Lily belongs, are marvelous in their hues and delightful in their imitation of the decorative patterns and color combinations of their insect friends. A visitor to the big trees of the Mariposa grove relates how she found a bed of Sego Lilies in which, on close examination, she discovered fourteen distinct markings, the flowers resembling so many butterflies with wings outspread for flight, their rich color glistening in the sun.

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LIVE STOC

PREVENT LOSS IN SH

Partitions in Stock Cars Se Large Animals From S Ones Is Good Idea.

(Prepared by the United States D of Agriculture.)

A little time and labor, p little money, expended in bu strong partition to separate animals from the small on mixed carload of live stock ly saves the shipper from loss on the consignment, sa ists of the bureau of market States Department of Ag The smaller animals, such lambs, goats and sheep ar in danger of injury from t animals, and this is especi when the car is overcrowde

Crippled animals mean a l shipper, for they bring price erably below the regular ma for sound stock. Dead anim still less—in the case of about 50 to 75 cents per pounds for grease. There the danger, too, of the sm becoming bruised, throug jostled and kicked by the la Bruises make a carcass less as the meat inspectors in th terhouses cut out all bruis Meat thus mutilated is sold er grades, the depreciation upon how much cutting w sary. The buyers in the st know this, of course, an quently, pay less for anim

Goats Cleaning Out Wee

show bruises or seem likel suffered in this way.

Buyers are afraid of bru and for this reason are su small animals arriving at yards in a mixed carload larger animals are not part Such injuries are difficult in the live animal, but w stock, such as calves and rive in a badly soiled con ers usually suspect they trampled and bruised by mals, and as a rule the b safe by paying less money stock.

MORE BROOD SOWS O

Increase of 1,237,000 Over is Seen, Due Largely Stock of Corn.

There were 12,424,000 bre on farms April 1, the Un Department of Agriculture This is 1,237,000 animals on the same date in 1921 sents an increase of 11.1 p

The large corn crop las the unusually large farm corn are given as the exp the large increase in bre this spring. Corn was wor pork than as corn, and needed to eat the corn.

The number of hogs is sponsive to the general situation, the department In April 1918, the number sows was 9.5 per cent mo the same date in 1917, due prices as a result of war The figures on April, 1920, cline of 10 per cent for the on that date. The reason that the price of corn wa too high to encourage the hogs.

FINE FORAGE CROPS

Rape is Rich in Protein, W Will Carry More Ar Per Acre.

Rape is rich in protein most equal to alfalfa a crop for pigs. The chief to alfalfa lies in the fact generally carry more pig and does not need to be re year.

Make Land Pay M

Purebred live stock on would go far toward m priced land pay 6 per cen value.

Have Purebred Femal

Of course the purebred first step, but there's no ment against purebred fem stock improvement.

Take Care of Anim

Take good care of the and they will take care of