

FARM AND HOUSEHOLD.

RAISING AND KEEPING SWEET POTATOES.

One Man's Experience in Raising Them—Qualities of Honey—Clover for Pigs—Live Stock Lore and Household Hints.

Sweet Potatoes.

A writer in the Kansas Farmer gives his experience in raising this crop: From the 1st to the 15th of April, is the proper time to put the seed into the hot-bed to sprout. Some plants will then be ready by the first week in May, which is early enough to begin setting the plants. Set earlier, they are liable to be lost by frosts and insects.

Cover the potatoes not less than three inches with earth that will not bake or pack, so as to exclude the air from the potatoes, as they must have air to enable them to sprout well.

Be careful not to allow the bed to get hot; more seed is lost in this way than in any other. Sprouting by fire is preferable when extensive work is carried on; late sprouting may be done by sun heat alone by covering the bed at night and exposing it to sunshine during the day. Small potatoes may be laid almost touching each other in the bed; larger ones should have some space between them.

The common method is to plant in ridges, which are thrown up with the plow, four feet of space being sufficient for a ridge.

The land should be plowed a few weeks before ridging, both to get it in good tilth and to make it firmer for ridging. If the work is well done with the plow little more is needed than to dress the top of the ridge with hoe or rake.

Plants should be set from fifteen to eighteen inches apart, and if the soil is fine and moist may be set without watering. Always have the root wet when setting.

The cultivation necessary is to keep the crop clear of weeds and grass by the use of the cultivator and hoe.

The proper time for digging the crop is when you expect hard frosts soon, as in a hard frost the upper ends of some of them are liable to be frozen, which will spoil them.

Our method of digging is with the plow. Have your plowshare very sharp. Now to cut the vines, run the plow on the share at the foot of the ridge. This done, turn squarely around, and with one deep furrow throw out the ridge, then throw out the potatoes with prong-hoes.

Keeping the potatoes is the most difficult part. A warm, even temperature is required, from 50 degrees to 60 degrees. Dryness is also an essential condition. A house for the purpose, whether under ground or above should secure these conditions. They should be put into the cellar soon after digging.

Warm, fair days are best for digging, as they dry in the sunshine on such days.

An extensive potato-grower in this county keeps a stove hot in his cellar while he is putting the potatoes in, for the purpose of drying out the potatoes. It is thought best to put up the potatoes in large bulk and with nothing among them.

The best method of gathering from the field is to put them into boxes holding about a bushel. I use cracker-boxes, and haul them from the field to the cellar in the boxes. This method requires less handling than any other.

They should be handled carefully and not bruised, and those that are cut should not be put away to keep. There seems to be very little difficulty in keeping them until January.

Qualities of Honey.

The various grades and qualities of honey are dependent largely upon the method of keeping the bees and of getting them started properly in the spring; but there is another factor entering into the case which is often overlooked. Honey is obtained from a great variety of flowers, and the nectar contained in the different species is widely different. There is also a great variation in the amount and quality of this nectar at different seasons of the year. The bees gathering their sweets from all the flowers, mix it together so that one cannot distinguish that obtained from certain flowers unless one species is strongly predominant in any locality or during a certain season of the year. This is so true that in many sections of the land honey of wonderful flavor and essence is produced simply because fine honey plants abound in great quantities.

The first grade of honey is obtained in the spring of the year, during April and May, and it is made chiefly from the fruit blossoms of trees. Fruit orchards are then the great centres of the blooming flowers, and the bees get three-quarters of their nectar from this source. Forest trees are also in bloom, and a great deal of the honey is obtained from this source also. This grade of honey possesses a peculiar aromatic flavor, and is of the color of amber and very heavy. The comb part has a large proportion of wax, and is of a light straw color. So little of this is deposited that very small quantities of fruit blossom honey ever gets to market, although when obtained pure and free from a mixture of other kinds it is of wonderful flavor and color.

The next distinct grade noticeable is gathered in June and July, and is always of less specific gravity than the former. It is destitute of the rich flavor gathered earlier in the season, and sometimes it is so watery and thin that it will ferment and become sour. Generally, however, it brings a better market price than the early honey, for it is deposited in a thinner and whiter comb, which gives it a better appearance. It is generally

called white clover honey, and it is principally made from these plants. By many it is preferred to that extracted from the blossoms of the fruit trees, while others consider it much inferior. The first grade, however, is generally spoiled by being mixed with the honey that is made between the fruit blossoming time and the period for the white clover plants to bloom. This is very black and unpleasant honey, and it is collected from a great variety of plants.

The last grade of honey is made from the buckwheat blossoms, and this fact is made apparent by the strong odor that is emitted from the hives. The honey, however, loses this rank smell in a few weeks, and it is then preferred my many to the white clover honey. It has a dark brown color, but the comb in which it is contained is whiter than either of the other grades. It is also so thin and light that a piece containing a pound of honey would not weigh much more than a fourth of an ounce. The honey made at this period is lighter than that made from the fruit tree blossoms and heavier than the clover. If these varieties were kept separate in the hives, and marketed in this condition, they would sell much better than if mixed.

They are never mixed in the cells by the bees, and a sheet of comb containing two sorts can be divided with a knife so as to separate the kinds.—American Cultivator.

Live Stock Lore.

Too much fat will check the growth of bone and muscle.

If high feeding causes hog cholera, starving will not prevent it.

Be willing to sell hogs at any time that a paying price can be secured for them.

Anything that is worthy of a place on the farm should receive good attention.

Many find it an advantage to soak the corn thoroughly before feeding to the pigs.

Feed hogs on pasture some grain every day, to ripen the growth as it is made.

If the pigs get to rooting the pasture the best plan is to ring them as soon as possible.

Success with cattle, as with other stock, depends upon the care and management given to the details.

It is not a good plan to pasture the sheep and calves together; the calves seem to dislike to eat after the sheep.

The start that a pig gets the first three months of its life has much to do with its future thrift and growth.

The farmer that expects to make the feeding of cattle profitable must select his animals with reference to their capacity for taking on flesh.

It is rarely good policy to keep a brood sow that is vicious or troublesome. It is too often the case that they prove troublesome in the end.

A few specialists may breed for butter or beef as they see fit, but the majority of farmers must breed and feed for both.

There is a considerable difference in the amount of feed required during growth to fatten at maturity different animals even among those of the same breed.

Allowing hogs to run where there is sluggish or stagnant water greatly increases the chances of getting the cholera started. Good, pure water is as essential with hogs in maintaining health as with any other class of stock.

Household Hints.

In cooking tough meat or an old fowl, add a pinch of soda to the water to make it tender.

To prevent the disagreeable odor from stove polish put a little sugar with it when you wet it.

Label your plants by painting shingles white, split them into inch widths and write the name with a lead pencil.

A sure cure for fleas is to scatter a few drops of oil of pennyroyal among the clothing or beds that are infested with these pests.

Iron napkins perfectly dry before folding; iron only on one side, to preserve the polish, and with the selvage, to bring out the pattern.

Never omit regular bathing, for unless the skin is in a regular condition, the cold will close the pores and favor congestion or other diseases.

To select a fish see that the flesh is firm when pressed by the finger, and the eyes full. If the fish is at all stale the flesh will be flabby and the eyes sunken.

To sweeten salt pork, cut as many slices as you will require for breakfast and soak till morning in sweet milk and water; then rinse till the water is clear and fry.

Comb and rubbing the scalp of the head with the hand draws the blood up to the surface of the head, and not only relieves the pain at times, but adds new strength to the hair.

It is really extravagant to buy poor table-cloths. They are never dainty and need soon to be repaired or replenished; and the cost of two poor ones is more than the cost of a handsome double damask which will be a joy for years.

Do not let your laundress or wash-woman put clothes into the blueing water until they have been well shaken, if tossed in while folded, as they come through the wringer they are almost certain to be streaked with bluing.

If soup is desired frequently, stock for making it quickly can always be on hand. With your meat cleaver cut all the bones left from your roasts and beefsteaks, and keep them in a covered stone jar. When you have sufficient put them on and boil for three hours; strain this into an earthen vessel and set aside to cool. A thick top of grease will rise to the surface, which can be used for frying purposes.

A DINNER AND A KISS.

"I have brought your dinner, father," The blacksmith's daughter said, As she took from her arm a kettle, And lifted its shining lid, "There's not any pie or pudding, So I will give you this," And upon his toll-worn forehead She left a childish kiss.

The blacksmith tore off his apron, And dined in happy mood, Wondering much at the savor Hid in his humble food, While all about him were visions Full of prophetic bliss; But he never thought of the magic In his little daughter's kiss.

While she with her kettle swinging, Merrily trudged away, Stopping at sight of a squirrel, Catching some wild bird's lay, And I thought how many a shadow Of life and fate we should miss, If always our frugal dinners Were seasoned with a kiss. —Mrs. M. L. Rayne.

BEPPLO.

Beppo was the name of the new pony; and whatever in the world could be the matter with him neither master nor man could make out. The master was the new rector of Mackestey, Mr. Martin, inexperienced in country life; and Beppo was his first adventure in horse-flesh. The man was Roger, Roger was a character; once seen, never forgotten.

Mr. Martin's new living was so far away from a railway station that a pony-carriage seemed a necessity; and there was a large garden, which he certainly could not work without assistance. Therefore he retained the services of the late rector's factotum, and a good servant Roger made, he was masterful, it was true, and had his own way in everything. He ruled the stable and garden with the rule of an autocrat.

He mercilessly snubbed his master when he displayed any innocent want of understanding of the details of Roger's departments. But he was a good servant; he had the interests of his master thoroughly at heart; and he had a further great notion of the dignity of his position in the village.

Roger was in dismay on hearing that the new rector was going to buy a pony. "What does the master know about horse-flesh? Sure as I'm here, he'll be done." But he was forced to admire Beppo when he arrived, and to approve of the purchase when he had seen him in harness. He was fourteen and a half hands high, six years old, a tight chestnut.

Mr. Martin had been to Suffolk to look at him, and had been driven round the neighborhood by his owner—who was a medical man retiring from the active work of his profession—to try the pony's paces. So pleased had he been, that the bargain was concluded, and in a few days Beppo arrived safely at Mackestey.

To drive he was excellent. He made a good pace, stepped out well, and seemed to be frightened at nothing. Wheelbarrows and tricycles had no terrors for him, nor even trains at the level crossings. But when he got into his stable, all seemed changed.

He flagged, dropped his head and ears, looked uneasily around whenever the door opened, and was generally out of sorts. At first this was set down to the change of groom; but he had no dislike for Roger, and indeed had taken to him readily. Could it be change of air? If so, he would be equally uneasy when being driven. After a week or ten days a farrier was called in; but he professed himself unable to do anything, until some definite ailment declared itself. And so master and men were both getting dispirited.

"You'd better 'a lot me gone, sir," said Roger.

"Why, Roger, wouldn't you have bought him?"

"Well, perhaps—with reluctance the man admitted—"I suppose I should. But I should have asked more about him, and found out if anything wasn't quite right. You can't buy a horse like you buy a log o' mutton."

"Well, but he's a good beast, Roger, and I'm sure you would have bought him if you had gone."

"Maybe so, maybe so; but I never bought a pig in a poke yet." The gentleman from whom the purchase had been made was communicated with, and was much annoyed that anything should seem to be wrong. Nothing of the sort had ever been noticed before, and the animal was sound in every way. Mr. Martin had in fact paid a guinea for a certificate. And so what to do they did not know.

Now it happened, about a fortnight after the purchase, that Mr. Martin had to drive to the station, some six miles off, to fetch his sister's son, Alfred, to spend a portion of his holidays at Mackestey. He was a very bright boy of twelve, and a great favorite with Mrs. Martin and with his little cousin Lucy, who was some three years younger than Alfred, and who regarded him as a sort of perfection of boyhood. He was full of tricks and dodges and fun, without being mischievous; and as good-humored and affectionate as a boy could be. At home he had numbers of pets, having a craze for live creatures; but he was never charged with ill-treating them, or neglecting them, or getting tired of them.

"How do, uncle?—Oh! what a jolly cob!" were the words with which he announced himself, bag in hand, as he emerged from the station gateway.

"How are you, Alfred?—All well at home?—That's right. Yes, the pony looks nicely, doesn't he? You shall see him trot directly. But there's something wrong with him, I don't know what. He isn't all right in the stable."

"What's amiss?" asked the boy. "I wish I could tell you. Can't find out. He doesn't seem happy. Do you know anything about horse-flesh? I should think a couple of half-crowns well laid out, if you can give us a hint?"

Alfred laughed at the idea; but his experience was not among horses. And so they chatted on until they reached the rectory.

Here Lucy took possession of the boy at once, and showed off the premises to him. His interest was greatly aroused when he realized the immense capacity of the stable yard for a private menagerie. A broken down summer house in a neglected corner of the garden at once suggested rabbits.

"Will aunt let you keep rabbits, Lucy? I could soon turn this into a rabbit hutch."

And so, chatting and laughing, skipping and trotting, the little girl led her cousin round to introduce him to Roger. The indisposition of the pony was heavy on Roger's soul; and he disliked visitors to the stable in consequence. There was a reproach to him, Roger, in asking a stranger what he could suggest.

Alfred went up directly to the pony's head, and patted it and spoke to it. "Good old Beppo! What's amiss, Beppo? Don't you like Mackestey?"

The pony had looked round when the stable door opened, but drooped his head again listlessly when the children came in.

"Are you a horse-doctor?" asked Roger.

"No, I'm not," answered the boy; "but I'm fond of live beasts, and they generally like me.—You'll soon like me, won't you Beppo?" And the creature certainly did seem to respond to the boy's caresses. "And I've got an idea," proceeded the boy; "and I'll tell uncle."

"What's your idea, sir? Better tell me. The master don't know much about horse-flesh."

"Never mind, I'll tell him first." And so the children moved away. But no sooner were they out of Roger's hearing than Lucy began to coax. "Tell me, Alfred dear, do tell me."

"Promise not to tell, Lucy. I believe Beppo misses something—something on the ground. He keeps looking down. There has been a tame bird, or a puppy, or something, where he came from, that he was fond of. And he can't make it out. Haven't you got a dog?"

"Father talks of getting one," answered the girl; "but he hasn't heard of one yet."

"Well, let's find uncle, and see what he thinks of my idea."

Mr. Martin was soon found, reading in the greenhouse. He was much tickled with the boy's fancy, and thought it characteristic and original; but was laughingly obliged to admit that he did not see much in it. However, on being pressed by Alfred, he undertook to write to Beppo's late owner and ask the question. Until a reply came, Roger was unceasing in his banter.

"Won't you tell me your idea, Master Alfred?" he asked. "Come to nothing, eh? Not come to nothing? Going to cure him yet? We want a new farrier hereabouts. You might set up and make your fortune."

Alfred did not mind this sort of joking at all, and generally retorted with effect.

And in a few days a letter came with a hamper from Beppo's late master. The letter said that the suggestion was a most happy one. There was a little kitten that used to frisk about Beppo's stable. The pony and the kitten were much attached to one another.

Pussy would jump on the pony's back, play between his ears, drop into the manger, stand up and pat his nose; while Beppo would always look for her on his return from a drive. She had been much dispirited since her play-fellow had gone, and as they were looking out for a home for her, they thought the best thing to do was to send her off at once to Mackestey, on the chance that Mr. Martin might be able to keep her.

"Where's Alfred?" shouted Mr. Martin. "He shall open the hamper. He shall work out his idea all by himself."

The boy took out the kitten carefully and gently and began to pet it and talk to it. Then he took it to the kitchen and buttered its paws; which he understood was the correct thing to do with a new cat. And then a procession advanced to the stable; Alfred bearing the kitten—who did not in the least understand what was going on—led the van; Lucy came next, in a state of great excitement; and last came Mr. Martin, much amused, and very curious as to the result.

The result was completely successful as their most sanguine expectations could have imagined. As soon as the stable door was opened, the kitten jumped down with a loud "Mew!" and bounded with tail erect to Beppo. He for his part at once recognized his friend, gave a glad whinny and put his head down to the ground and fondled the little thing gently. Then she jumped up to the manger, on the pony's head, and ran up and down the whole length of the pony's back. It was the prettiest thing to see, both creatures almost beside themselves with delight. The pony indulged in a gentle murmur of content; the kitten purred loudly.

The cure was complete. Roger gave in. Lucy admired Alfred more than ever.

"Let's see if I can find those two half-crowns I promised you," said Mr. Martin, as they left the stable; "I never paid money better earned in my life."—Saturday Evening Post.

A Snake in Ireland. A snake has been found in Ireland at last. A Belfast newspaper says that a snake 7½ feet long and nearly 7 inches in circumference has been killed at Nora's Glen. It was taken to a contractor's yard in the town, where the reptile was inspected by a large number of people. The solitary snake of Ireland will be preserved in a glass case for the inspection of future generations.

THE FARM AND HOME.

VALUABLE SUGGESTIONS FOR A SHEEP BARN.

A Good and Cheap Shelter—Making Solid Walks—Fattening Calves Profitably—Stock Notes and Home Hints.

Sheep Barn.

The plans for an exclusively sheep barn are as numerous as for other buildings, and the fancy must be consulted as to which one he will adopt. A good plan, and one often described, is to erect a main building, and set it upon posts about four or five feet from the ground. The space under this is used for shelter boarding it upon three of the sides at least. Such a building has some advantages over others that may be constructed, in that it is cheap, and may be used for cattle, if sheep raising should at any time be discontinued. There may be attached to this, if the size of the flock should demand it, either upon one or two sides, sheds, either open on one side or so constructed that they may be enclosed if it is at any time desirable. As to the size, the building, of course, should be large enough for the storage of whatever food it may be desirable to store in it. There may be trap doors in the floor to throw fodder down in the space beneath. If there are sheds adjoining, there should be doors opening from the main building into the sheds for the same purpose. The size of the space beneath must be regulated according to the number of sheep, or the number of sheep should be regulated according to the dimensions of the floor of the shelter. If the shelter is enclosed, and well ventilated, the allowance of space regarded as about correct, is ten feet square to each sheep, unless there is no yard at all, when the space should be more.

A way to economize space is to build a floor in the center of the shed, or under the barn if it is high enough from the ground, and let part of the sheep occupy the upper floor, using a sloping passage way, with cleats nailed to it, as a means of access to it. In all cases and in this case particularly, a floor that is above sheep should be made tight. When there is nothing but hay and grain above them, the prevention of the sifting down of dirt upon the sheep is all that is necessary. But when sheep are kept on the floor above, the floor must be made not only of matched boards, but the joints should be tarred and plenty of bedding provided to insure the absorption of moisture.

But we do not as a general thing advise keeping sheep in this way, says the Farmers Voice. To adopt this plan under a barn would place the barn too high even if insufficient space was allowed the sheep, and as a matter of fact the second floor ought not to be nearer than five feet to the ground floor—some say seven—and there ought to be that much space between the second floor and the roof above it. To allow this space under a barn would be practically out of the question; if the barn was built on a level and on posts. But the reader can act upon the suggestion, if for any reason he thinks it advisable. Sheep, we may say, prefer the "upper berth" when they can get it, and will eagerly go up the incline passage way, as soon as they learn what it means.

Making Solid Walks.

Making walks and carriage drives of gravel and broken stone, placed loosely in position, renders them deficient in smoothness and solid character. They are soon uneven and distorted in some degree, and are liable to be more or less displaced. To prevent this result, the material should be placed in successive layers, and each one beaten hard before the next one is applied. It is here that broken stone, with its angles, has a great advantage over rounded and worn gravel, the smooth pebbles of which roll over each other and do not remain in place. The angular fragments, on the other hand, become by their angles, compactly wedged together. The excavation which is made for filling to make a walk, if eight inches deep, may be filled with four successive layers—the first two inches or more at the bottom, evenly spread and then beaten solid, then the second layer similarly treated; then the third; and last the upper stratum of an inch or two of finer material and with a very even surface, smoothly beaten. Such a walk will be far more perfect and well compacted together, and be superior to one all filled at once, and not thus packed in a solid mass.

A carriage road is to be similarly treated, pressing each added layer with a heavy roller, and finishing the whole by pressing repeatedly and making thorough work. For public roads, whether made of earth or gravel, the rolling should be thorough, and the slipshod practice especially avoided of leaving the material in heaps for the passing vehicles to level and make hard—which they, however, never accomplish, and only make a lumpy, rutted wagon track.

Any one may see the compacting process illustrated who burns anthracite coal in an open stove, or where the top is open or accessible. Take the size commonly known as "grate" or "stove coal," and observe the facility with which the flame streams up through the crevices of the coal, when the fire happens to burn too furiously. Now take a light poker, or any light iron rod and tap this coal surface a number of times, going over the whole repeatedly, and causing the fragments of coal to settle among one another and fill up all these crevices, greatly reducing the intensity of the fire. In the same way the broken stone is made to settle by beating into a nearly solid mass.

Where gravel instead of broken stone is used it should be assorted and screened so as not to be larger

than chestnut coal for all but the surface, and not larger than stove coal for carriage roads.—Country Gentleman.

Thick and Thin Planting.

Prof. G. E. Morrow of the Agricultural experiment station, at the university of Illinois, writes in answer to a query: "Planting at the rate of one kernel, each nine to twelve inches apart in rows at the average distance apart gave us a larger yield of grain than did thicker planting; but that thicker planting, up to one kernel each three inches, gave a larger total yield, that is, of both stalks and grain, than did thinner planting. We are not able to say positively whether still thicker planting would increase the total yield. We believe that, as the grain is more valuable than the stalks and leaves, the greatest food value from the whole crop is gained when the corn is planted at the rate of one kernel about six inches in the row.

"You will notice that we say, at the rate of one kernel. Our experiments as a whole have not shown any decisive difference in yield, whether the corn was planted in hills or drills, where an equal quantity of seed was planted per acre. Where thicker planting than is usual was done there was no conclusive evidence that it was better to plant the kernels singly than two or three in a place, at correspondingly greater distances.

Stock Notes.

Never allow the calves to run down in condition.

Be sure the cattle are fat before sending to market.

Breeding for early maturity will help increase the profits.

Because corn is convenient to feed many feed their hogs too much.

If a sow is well fed she will suckle two litters in a year and keep in good flesh.

If the pigs cannot have a good pasture, grow some soiling crops for them.

A little corn to growing pigs is beneficial, but too much is detrimental.

Feed the pigs the refuse from the orchard and garden; it adds to the variety.

The hog pens should not give off offensive odors any more than the stables.

On the average farm a few pigs can readily be made more profitable than a larger number.

The slops from the house are not a good substitute for water although many farmers compel it to take the place.

One calf well raised is worth two stunted during the first year's growth. It is not necessary, however, to force the growth.

Treat the hogs in a way that will at least secure reasonable good health and thrift; this is necessary if a profit is realized.

In breeding, the good traits of the dam should be improved upon by the sire, so that they can be perpetuated as fully as possible.

No man can tell what the price of agricultural products will be a year hence, so that all the farmer can do is to provide for future contingencies and take the chances.

In using a good bull to improve the cattle on the farm, do not make the mistake of getting discouraged because fine animals are not secured with the first offspring.

Home Hints.

Rugs of rag carpeting are very pretty, and one for in front of a bed, made of white and light-colored scraps is particularly dainty.

Wormwood boiled in vinegar and applied hot, with enough clothes wrapped around to keep the flesh moist is said to be an invaluable remedy for a sprain or bruise.

Save pieces of string as they are brought into the house, tie them together and wind into balls. Use these for knitting dishclothes and you will find them much more serviceable than any other kind.

Ordinary telegraph wire makes a better line to hang clothes on to dry than the hempen one generally used. The wire does not sag, rot nor break, as the rope does. It is easily wiped off and made clean.

You can keep butter and milk fresh a long time in warm weather without ice by wrapping a large porous pot in a wet cloth and inverting it over the butter or milk. The external evaporation cools the interior.

In order to remove a glass stopper from a bottle, either heat the neck by holding it over a lighted match or by pouring hot water over it. The object is to expand the neck by heat, so the stopper must not be heated at the same time.

Do you know that you can make your own hand grenades, to be used in case of fire, by filling old quart bottles with the following? Chloride of lime, crude, twenty parts; common salt, five parts; water, seventy-five parts. Those who have convenient hand pumps may keep this solution handy and throw it with the pump.

Holes in the plaster should and can be soon mended. Mix a thin paste of plaster Paris and water. Mix only a little at a time, as it sets very rapidly. After filling up the hole smooth the plaster with a flat-bladed knife and cover the spot with wall paper, matching it carefully and putting it on smoothly.

A pretty table scarf can be made of white felt. A half yard will be enough, as the felt is about two yards wide. Make a fringe nine or ten inches deep by cutting the felt up in narrow strips. Sketch above this a border. The chrysanthemum is pretty. Work them in dull pinks and whites. Use oil paints and a long-hair brush.