

Celery Culture in Nebraska

When an Omaha housekeeper rings up her grocer and orders a dime's worth of celery sent up "right away" she probably does not know that celery is a home product. The grocer himself buys it from the commission man and he may and may not inquire where the commission firm gets it. As a matter of fact the celery which will be used on Omaha tables this coming season is now growing in the fields in two states, Michigan and Nebraska. And the Nebraska-grown celery takes precedence in the Omaha market, both in quantity and quality. Because of its superior quality it usually brings a little higher price than the famous Kalamazoo product, once considered unequalled.

It is only in recent years that celery has been established as a regular Nebraska crop. For celery farming is one of the newest of our state industries. It is now grown in sufficient quantities for shipping near Hebron, North Platte and Elkhorn, but the largest amount is grown at Kearney. The peculiar, sandy, alluvial soil of the islands of the Platte seems well suited to the growth of delicately-flavored, nutty celery, and the Kearney product is grown on the large

island, some forty miles long, which lies between the north channel and the Platte proper. The greatest essential of celery is water, and as long as there is water in the river the soil of the island remains moist.

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A description of the process of cultivation may be of interest. The first essential is richness of soil and the second is water. It has been said that the soil cannot be made too rich for celery. Through the winter many teamsters make a living by hauling manure from the town stables to the celery fields. The owner of horses does not have to pay for having his stable yard cleaned up, but is besieged by applicants, who offer to haul away the accumulation for nothing. Opinions differ as to how much fertilizer is required. One successful grower has never used more than sixteen wagonloads to the acre, while another has used as high as forty loads.

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The plant beds are prepared with great care. The ground is plowed and well harrowed and then sifted through a sand screen to take out all lumps. The beds are enclosed by planks, and as soon as the plants are placed in them muslin is stretched across and fastened to the planks to protect the young celery from the sun until it is well rooted. They are kept moist

by daily sprinkling, and when the weeds begin to come they are pulled out by hand. It is tedious, tiresome work, kneeling by the beds, crawling, crouching, leaning across, and hot work, too, when the sun shines. For the later celery the seeds are sowed in open field beds, and the plants are thinned out and weeded until time to set them in the field rows. The early celery is transplanted twice and the later but once.

When the plants have attained a height of five inches they are taken from the beds, packed loosely into boxes and carried to the fields. Here they are placed five inches apart in rows spaced like corn rows, and 30,000 plants are required to plant an acre. While small they are weeded in the rows by hand and during the summer are given very thorough cultivation, being gone over every two weeks with a fine tooth cultivator. The fields do not present an imposing appearance, even the largest tracts looking "patchy." The rows are laid out perfectly straight, but of uneven length on the low, flat spots of ground, which will remain moist through the summer. Experience has shown that it will not pay to extend the rows over ridges and elevations where the soil will become too dry for celery. These low places are fearfully muddy after heavy rains, like those we have had recently, and during the winter, after a thaw, the roads over the island marshes are almost impassable. But while the celery grower, his men and his teams stick in the mud a part of the year, along late in summer when other crops are burning brown he congratulates himself on the wisdom of his choice, for his celery fields look cool and damp. This spring the rains have been so unusually heavy that the lowest fields were flooded, causing a loss of a number of acres of plants. Part have been replanted, but some growers have been unable to obtain plants to replace those lost. A gentleman who has farmed on the island

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In the old method of bleaching the plants were set in trenches and straw was placed on each side the rows, the soil being thrown up as they grew, so that when they had reached maturity only the tops protruded. The bleaching method used in Nebraska is by means of boards on each side of the rows when the plants are about a foot high. Growth continues rapidly after the boards are in place and the bleaching requires two weeks' time.

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When the harvesting season begins the celery fields present busy scenes. As soon as the celery is properly bleached the boards are removed, the stalks cut and carried to tables nearby, where it is bunched and tied up in bundles of a dozen stalks each. The smaller shipments, which are crated and expressed, have the outer leaves and roots trimmed off and are washed free from earth. It is classed as No. 1, No. 2 or No. 3 celery and brings 30 cents, 20 cents or 10 cents, according to grade. When shipped in car lots the celery is bunched in dozens like the other, but with the outer leaves, roots and soil adhering to it. Two extra floors are put in a car, making three decks, and the bunches are packed in an end on each deck. These car lots are specified as two grades and bring from 12 cents to 20 cents wholesale.

When conditions are favorable the crop is exceedingly profitable, but a green hand can lose plenty of money at it, and even the most experienced may find atmospheric conditions against them and lose heavily. It is an attractive crop, partly because it is comparatively new, and visitors in celery districts always like to visit the fields especially in the harvesting season. The breeze is scented with the fragrance of celery, the straight rows of green on the dark soil present a pleasant picture in the midst of bustling activity and never does celery taste sweeter than when fresh from its hiding place between the bleaching boards.

MINNIE BOYER DAVIS.

ture and properties of air, and in opening the way to the practical utilization of this knowledge in advancing human welfare.

The design for the medal, which is shown in the accompanying illustration, is by Mr. J. C. Chaplain of Paris, a member of the French Academy, and one of the most eminent medalists of the world. The obverse bears the figure of a woman carrying a torch in her left hand, and in her right a scroll emblematic of knowledge, with the legend "Per Orbem" across the face of the medal. The reverse is adapted from the seal of the institution by St. Gaudens.

Summer at the Vatican

The gardens of the pope are well worth the small difficulty of getting an order to visit them, since this is accorded almost for the asking and to any party of six. The approach is the same as that leading to the library and sculpture galleries and the entrance is to the left of these.

The gate is kept by a rather seedy looking old man in military cloak, who is frequently surrounded by a varied assortment of cats. The entrance opens on a terrace which was used in the middle ages as a tilting ground, and looking over the parapet one sees what in the same era was a lake for mimic naval battles, but which now is an Italian garden laid out in flower beds, with paths ornamented by small orange trees.

Passing part way down the terrace you enter under an arch to the right two long and ancient arched avenues of ilex, in the middle the sunken bed of an old canal ending in a rocky structure covered with maidenhair fern. There are kept here a cluster of remarkable animals, resembling sheep, goats and deer. In reality, they are mountain sheep, sent as a present to the holy father on his jubilee by the people of Carpineta in the Campagna, whose ancient castle is the home of his race—that of the Pecci. Close to the rockwork at the end of the hollow stands a little copy of the grotto of Lourdes. Here visitors leave their cards.

It would seem that he has no great taste for flowers, for the long stretch of garden in front of the summer house is wild and neglected. To the right of the strip of ground is a very goodly vineyard. Leo XIII has a plan of his own for its cultivation, which strikes a stranger as novel and original. Between the vines are planted thick rows of broad beans, which are dug into the earth for manure. The yearly yield is some three thousand bottles of excellent wine, chiefly sent to various hospitals. Olive trees are

covered with renaissance stucco work, in which old terra cotta bas reliefs are set, lies a courtyard, a perfect oval in shape, with walls, arched entrance, chambers, and a beautiful colonnaded loggia some ten feet high from the ground. This courtyard is surrounded with marble benches, and the walls and entrances are incrustated with pebbles and shells, suggestive of the coolness of ocean waves and breezes.

The visitor now turns into the path leading to the terrace entrance, pausing to admire the magnolia and stone pines towering upward a little distance from the casino. It is with a feeling of very great regret that a stranger to Rome leaves the gardens, for they are peaceful and satisfying in their undisturbed serenity.

Rails Ground to Dust

As consumers of steel the railroads in the vicinity of Pittsburg lead the world, reports the Pittsburg Dispatch. During the last three months 170 miles of new steel rails, averaging ninety pounds to the yard, have been put down or distributed within thirty miles of the center of the city.

There are 1,760 yards in a mile, which would mean 299,200 yards for one line of rails in 170 miles, or 25,928,000 pounds, or, say, 53,856,000 pounds for both lines of rails, or 269,283 tons of steel rails needed in one year for Pittsburg roads, 90 per cent of which was for renewals on old lines.

There is somewhat of a mystery regarding where the steel worn out on a big road goes to. It is ground down almost to imperceptible dust by the constant friction of the grinding wheels and this friction is 45 per cent greater on curves than on straight stretches of track. The wear is also much greater on ascending grades on a straight track than on descending grades. On curves the wear is mostly lateral or horizontal, while on a straight track it is perpendicular, with a slight inclination toward the inside of the rail next to the flanges of the wheels.

The millions of tons of steel ground down to dust by the wheels of trains in this country are lost. It cannot be regained for scrap, because it settles down into the ballast, is brushed away by the rush of air caused by the swiftly moving train and, like the star dust that falls upon the ocean, is lost forever.

In time, as civilization and the wheels of civilization move on, the railroads of the chief steam railways, as well as part of the adjoining ground, will become thoroughly



WEEDING THE CELERY.

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Gold Medal for Discoverer of Liquid Air

There has just been forwarded to the American embassy in London the first gold medal ever presented by the Smithsonian Institute of Washington. The recipient is Prof. James Dewar of the Royal Institute, London, and this honor being conferred upon him for his wonderful discovery that air can be liquefied. The medal is paid for out of the Hodgkins fund of \$200,000, which was established by a donation in October, 1891, from Mr. Thomas George Hodgkins of Setauket, N. Y., the income from a part of which was to be devoted "to the increase and diffusion of a more exact knowledge in regard to the nature and properties of atmospheric air in connection with the welfare of man."

After the formal acceptance of this donation a competition was announced in which prizes were offered for memoirs recording new and important discoveries with regard to the nature and properties of the atmosphere and the Hodgkins medal of the institution was established for important contributions to our existing knowledge in this connection, or for original and practical applications of such knowledge to the welfare of man. In addition to the special prizes which were awarded at the close of the competition, honorable mention, accompanied by the Hodgkins medal in silver or bronze, was accorded to several of the contestants designated by the committee on award.

Carrying out the design of the founder, the first Hodgkins medal in gold was awarded to Prof. Dewar, in recognition of his long continued and valuable researches in connection with the increase and diffusion of a mere exact knowledge in regard to the na-



WASHING AND LOADING.

grown against the wall, but they have a sickly air.

At the further end of the vineyard are some fenced enclosures containing a number of especially handsome palms, planted perhaps ten years ago, and growing very well. Beneath the palms two ostriches have a dwelling and very much at home the couple appear, while their plumage keeps in very good condition. In strange neighborhood within the next enclosure are a herd of brown and white deer and a "pelican of the wilderness," the latter a monster of ugliness, his vast bill striped with bright orange and blue.

A little further on is to be found the pontifical villa, which forms the garden residence. It has been only lately finished and consists of a few plain rooms added on to the second of the round towers, one floor of which is the hall for receptions. From this a path descends to the vatican, at the end of the gardens near St. Peter's. On the way one passes an immense grotto, surmounted by an arch and a stone eagle, underneath which are cool, rocky chambers full of maidenhair. The ferns grow over two huge dragons, from whose mouths streams of water flow to mingle with others, all falling into a great basin below.

In an enormous recess, surmounted by a castellated wall, is a large stone table, from which rise six jets of water, three on each side of a seventh, which spurt out star-shaped. Over the front of the table a perfect sheet of fine transparent water flows down into the basin beneath. This is the celebrated fountain built by order of the Borgese pope, Paul V, and it represents very faithfully an exposition of the blessed sacrament on a Roman altar. The arched recess is full of maidenhair and the delicate fern is also seen through the crystal altar cloth.

The last spot to be visited is the famed casino of Pius IV, the most notable piece of architecture in the gardens. Hardly any building seems really beautiful when deserted, but the casino in its loneliness is still charming. In front of a little palace

impregnated with steel and iron dust from the grinding up of rails and wheels, because it must be remembered that the wheels grind the rails and the rails grind the wheels, and this constant shower of iron and steel dust is accumulating along our railroads at a rapid rate.

Rameses and His Beer

An interesting papyrus recently discovered shows that many of the ancient Egyptians were quite as fond of drinking good liquor as are any of the moderns, reports the Chicago Times-Herald. In this papyrus, which is 3,000 years old, the philosopher Ani writes the following words of warning on the subject of intoxication to a student in Chanau:

"I have been informed that you are not only neglecting your studies, but that you are also indulging in the most frivolous pleasures, and that you spend a good deal of your time in drinking. Now, how can it benefit you to drink so much beer every day? Take advice and shun that insidious liquor."

From other sources we learn that students in the land of the pyramids enjoyed their beer, and were quite as fond of playing practical jokes as any of their descendants. They loved on festive nights to assault innocent watchmen, and many a peaceful citizen have they aroused from slumber by thundering on the door of his house.

From the diary of an Egyptian Lieutenant who furnished about 2,000 years ago we obtain the interesting information that a quart of beer cost about 5 cents, and there are various entries in the book which allow us to infer that the average Egyptian never dreamed of quenching his thirst with less than a quart at a time. "Indeed," says the erudite Egyptologist who has deciphered this diary, "there are various facts which justify us in describing the thirst of the ancient Egyptians as pyramidal."



READY FOR THE MARKET.