

Everything for the Garden

HOW TO GET GOOD LETTUCE CROPS

Earliest Heads Secured from Plants Grown Under Sash—Most from Seeds in Drills.

Lettuce is the most popular of all the salad plants, says a report of the New Jersey State College of Agriculture, which says many inquiries are being received daily by the extension specialist in market gardening at the experiment station concerning varieties and methods of culture for this crop. A number of inquirers, it is said, complain that their attempts to get head lettuce in the past have resulted in the production of seed stocks. With this in mind, the experiment station makes the following statement:

"Certain requirements are necessary to produce fine, solid heads of lettuce. It requires a deep, rich soil filled with humus and readily available plant food. If the soil is acid, lime should be applied. The soil should be moist also and ample provision should be made for a water supply. Heads cannot develop when the plants stand closer than ten inches apart each way. It has been proved also that well-formed heads are difficult to get in hot weather, as the hot sun draws up the seed stocks.

"The earliest head lettuce is secured from plants grown under sash and gradually accustomed to the cold before being set in their permanent locations in the field very early in the spring. However, the main spring crop of lettuce is grown from seed sown in drills twelve inches apart about the first of April. When the lettuce begins to grow, the extra plants should be thinned out with a hoe, to stand ten inches apart in the row.

"The time for planting spring lettuce depends largely upon the temperature and moisture of the soil. In the cooler moisture of the soil the lettuce may be planted at a later date than in the warmer soils in which the moisture is not so pronounced. Head lettuce is seldom planted after the first of May, then not again until about July 15, at which time planting is begun for the fall crop. Lettuce planted up to the 10th of August will mature before severe freezing injures the plants. Sometimes the late maturing crop is protected with burlap or salt hay on very cold nights.

"Lettuce planted in May or June to mature in July or August is usually the non-heading Cos lettuce or Romaine. This is an upright growing variety, has very tender leaves and can stand the heat of the summer much better than the head varieties.

"The experiment station recommends a rich ground for lettuce planting. The ground should be plowed deeply and an application of lime, well-rotted manure and half a ton of potato fertilizer should be disked into it. A ton of chicken manure and 150 pounds of muriate of potash may take the place of the fertilizer, according to the experiment station specialist. Wood ashes and chicken manure generally will produce good lettuce if applied properly and generously."

The Garden

A great deal of valuable work in vegetable gardening is done during this month.

Promptness and accuracy in performing these various operations will go a long way towards getting started right, either in gardening on the farm or for market.

Thorough preparation of ground is a most important item in growing vegetable crops, just as is thorough culling and grading of the product when the time comes for selling. It is necessary not only to plow deeply in order to store water for the summer months, but thorough harrowing and planking will pay in the long run, even though it apparently seems to cover quite a long time.

I was looking over a piece of black land the other day on which the spike-tooth and plinker had worked together at least a dozen times, and it was time and money well spent.

Above all use good discretion regarding the condition of the soil for plowing or harrowing. I have lately seen some instances of soil handling which no good farmer would confess to.

Lettuce—This has been excellent growing weather for lettuce. The mild, damp days followed now by warm sunshine have caused such varieties as Wayhead, Blackseeded Tennis Ball and New York to sprout.

We already have quite a large number of plants set out. It is important to give these head lettuce plenty of room; eight inches is none too much in the row.

To follow these plants after they have begun to mature should be lettuce coming along now from seed. The above-mentioned varieties may be used again. The thinnings may be carefully transplanted to other parts of the garden.

The next sowing of lettuce seed should be of such varieties as Hanson or Salamander, those which will withstand the summer heat better than the varieties grown earlier in the season.

Cauliflower—Broccoli is still selling to some extent. I shall have more to say about this crop later, as I am now on my way to a broccoli-producing district.

The young cauliflower plants for the first new cauliflower crop of the season should be now in the frames, or possibly field set. None but the best plants of the Snowball variety should be used. We have several thousand at this time of writing in the frames.

These plants have been well aired during the daytime and protected at night by sash. Warm days have brought cool nights and we have taken no chances. Cauliflower must be gradually hardened and submitted to no sudden change of temperature, or even soil conditions.

If preparing to field set these plants, the soil should have been well fertilized previously, or even now chicken manure or nitrate of soda will help to push them along.

Tomatoes—These should also be well along by the time this issue of The Bee reaches its destination. The plants should be in the frames, standing fully four inches apart and should not be drawn—that is, long spindling.

By all means protect at night by cloth-covered sashes or glass. The majority of farm gardeners do not grow a good enough plant. On an average they are too small and puny at the proper time. Tomato plants now should be from eight to ten inches high and as thick as a lead pencil in diameter. In some sections possibly these heights might be varied according to the earliness or lateness of the district. It is not necessary to have tomato plants in bloom when they are set if one wishes an early crop. If they are blooming, well and good, but it should not be so at the expense of the vigor of the plants.

A good variety will produce blossoms very soon after the plant goes in the field if it is of the proper size when field set. The Earliana variety throws its blossoms more quickly—that is, earlier than the majority of so-called "early" varieties.

If you are buying tomato plants, pay a good, reasonable price, 25 to 50 cents per dozen, or even 5 cents apiece, and get individ-

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EVERYMAN'S GARDEN

Putting the Home Grounds Into Shape for the Summer.

From the Country Gentleman.

Early in the spring the lawn should be given a thorough cleaning to remove the winter mulch, if any was used, and other rubbish that may have accumulated. Then look it over carefully to see how much repairing is needed. If it is in fairly good condition about all the care required will be a thorough raking with an iron rake, loosening the soil as much as possible without tearing up any grass roots; sowing seed in spots that may look thin; applying a top-dressing of bone meal and wood ashes; and giving a thorough rolling with a heavy hand roller, or in a small plot a thorough firming with a hand tamp or the back of a spade.

The lawn that is beginning to wear out will need more attention. If it is very far gone the easiest and best thing to do is to plow or spade it up, working under a good coating of manure. Make the surface smooth and level and as fine as possible, and sow seed. Use bone meal on the surface.

A lawn that is bad only in spots may be put into condition by forking it up where the sod is poorest and adding new soil where it may seem necessary. Use on the surface bone meal or pulverized sheep manure mixed with the seed, as it is essential that the tiny grass plants have some rich food to fix upon as soon as they begin to grow.

Much of your success in making or remaking the lawn will depend upon the quality of grass seed you get. Good seed should weigh twenty pounds or more to the bushel. Buy only from a thoroughly reliable source, as weight alone is not a guarantee that the mixture contains the right grasses in the right proportions for lawn purposes. For shady positions a mixture adapted to such conditions must be obtained, for even good seed of an ordinary lawn mixture will give practically no results in a shady place.

A quart of good seed will cover about 300 square feet. In remaking old sod use only about half as much. Select a quiet day, preferably just before or just after a rain, and sow as evenly as possible. Going over the ground twice, in opposite directions, using half the seed each way, will do much toward insuring even distribution. Carry the seed in a box or a bag, not a bag, so that you can get at it readily, and sow it in small handfuls, being careful to take out just about the same amount each time.

(To Be Continued Next Sunday.)



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