

Canada's Young Farmers and Future Leaders.

Experience With Potatoes.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

It would appear from the scarcity of potatoes in Ontario this year that they were a difficult crop to raise. In this district, from what I hear, farmers pay very little attention to the cultivation of this particular crop, many planting only a few rows, feeling satisfied if they have enough for their own families. The belief seems to be common that regardless of whether the weather is cold or warm, wet or dry, potatoes should be planted not later than May 24 and earlier if possible. Many years there is not the proper warmth or growth in the ground for potatoes before the first or second week in June. The ground does not get the proper cultivation before planting, and very often less after. When the leaves are nearly all stripped off the plants a heavy application of Paris green is used, which at that stage does more to kill the plants perhaps than the bugs.

I might briefly outline my plan of raising potatoes this year. The potatoes for planting were Delawares of a medium size, cut into good-sized sets, no set having less than two eyes. The ground, slightly rolling clay loam, was plowed and harrowed early in the spring, then plowed, harrowed and rolled and a liberal coat of barnyard manure put on with a spreader; the potatoes were dropped in a furrow made by the plow, set from 12 to 16 inches apart. Every third furrow the potatoes were planted, thus making the rows approximately one yard apart. Right away after planting the ground was well harrowed to make it fine and even and conserve the moisture. The ground was harrowed every few days until the potatoes were probably three or four inches high. Then the scuffler was used quite frequently until the frost killed the stalks toward the end of September.

The potatoes could be seen all across the field three weeks after they were planted. The large, striped bugs were picked several times before the plants were large enough to spray with Paris green. They received two applications, a heaping tablespoonful being used to a fourteen-quart pail of water, applied with a compressed-air, hand sprayer. I noticed after the last spraying the plants began dying. The two sprayings were close together and no rain having fallen the whole application remained on the leaves and proved too strong. On August 15 two months after the potatoes were planted, we began using them. They were a fair size but for a week or so were damp and soft, but began getting quite dry and mealy. We dug on October 11 two full wagon-box loads of potatoes of a good quality, but not as large as they would have been had there been more rain and less extremely hot weather. The ground on which they were grown was slightly over one-half acre.

I am not relating these facts as anything wonderful for many have beaten this yield, but simply to show that potatoes planted as late as June 15 may even, in a very adverse year, yield a reasonable crop if given a fair amount of cultivation and care, while potatoes planted several weeks earlier and lacking medium care may produce almost nothing. I am much interested in potatoes, and am considering going into the crop quite extensively as I think it is remunerative.

Huron Co., Ont.

G. H. MAGEE.

An Idea for the Garden.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

We, like other farmers, had difficulties during the past season with raising our crops. Our land is clay, well manured and rich, but the incessant rains packed the ground so hard that when the very dry weather came we could not cultivate nor hoe to advantage. We feared we were going to have a poor crop, so I thought I would experiment a little, so about July 20 I took an axe and applied it vigorously to the soil. With considerable hard labor I at last succeeded in getting some soil loosened up. Then I made holes about two feet across and eighteen inches deep. I put into these holes some well-rotted manure. Next I put a six-inch tile on this, upright, then I covered the manure outside of the tile with about two inches of the pulverized earth. On this I planted potatoes and covered them with four or five inches of loose soil. Every evening I would fill this tile with water. You should have seen those potatoes grow. That was a lovely green spot in the garden all the rest of the summer, and when the frost came and cut the vines I dug the potatoes. They were a bigger crop and larger than the ones which were planted two months previously. Of course, they were not ripe, but were good flavor and cooked nicely.

This is a good plan to follow when preparing the hills for cucumbers, melons, etc. If they are to be raised in rows place tile six or eight feet apart in the rows, and then when dry weather comes it is a great help to the crop if water is poured into the tile. The water thus gets at the roots well under ground, if watered above ground little rootlets form near the top and when the sun comes out hot these little rootlets are burned and the crop suffers. This would be considerable labor to apply upon a large scale, but farmers need a garden as well as field crops, and this plan could be put into practice in the garden and would yield good returns for the extra trouble.

Oxford Co., Ont.

PAT.

Underdrain, and Seed Down on Fertile Fields.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

Every farmer will agree, that the season just passed, was the most trying, in some respects at least, that the farmers of Ontario have ever experienced. The seeding of 1916 will be long remembered by your readers, as being the wettest and most disagreeable in their experience, especially is this the case with myself, being my first year on my own account.

Some of the farmers in this vicinity got pretty blue, when it continued to rain day after day, but, being quite an optimist, I did not worry much, perhaps, because there were plenty of jobs to do around the house as every young man will know, who has just started up house-keeping. It is always easy for me to find a job for a rainy day, not having Peter McArthur's hankering after the village on a wet day, (as described in a recent issue.) The trouble is to keep from doing rainy day jobs on fine days. But, as I must stick to facts, I will try to tell your readers, some of my mistakes and difficulties, for they both were many.

My first mistake was in waiting, as in other years, for the ground to become reasonably dry before commencing to cultivate, when I should have gone contrary to previous rule, and muddled it in, although some years this is not a good plan. But last year was an exception, as the first piece, about two acres, which I cultivated and sowed on May 8, was in better condition, and yielded more, in both grain and straw of superior quality, than the last piece, about nine acres, sown on June 12.

It is in connection with this same nine-acre field, that I made the greatest mistake. It was a field with a southern slope and one that should have raised a good crop, but the previous owner of the farm had taken two crops of timothy hay off it in succession, consequently it was low in fertility. It was also badly in need of some underdrains, but, as it was almost impossible to get men to do digging last spring, I allowed it to go undrained. As a result, when we finished sowing it, on June 12 there were places, which would nearly mire a team. In some seasons it might have come through fairly well, but, last year the grain hardly covered the ground, when the hot, dry weather came on, and those wet places simply baked as hard as a rock.

Another mistake I made was in attempting to seed this field, which aside from being poorly drained, was not in condition on which to risk a seeding of grass seed, and, as I sowed about twelve pounds to the acre you can see it was quite a costly mistake, but not having any manure, at least not having time to draw it, I thought that being seeded would raise its fertility.

The proper course to have followed, considering the lateness of the season, would have been to have got it drained, and then plowed, summer-fallowed and manured it in readiness for fall wheat.

It is an old saying, but true, that experience is a good teacher, but we pay her a big salary. However, I have learned two lessons, which may also be helpful to others, which are:

1. Never for the price of a few tile and a few days labor, be bothered with a wet field, as the difference in the returns for one year will more than recompense you.

2. Never attempt to seed down a field, as I did, that is low in fertility, for you are almost sure of a failure, which will cost you dearly. Wait another year, when, perhaps you can spare some sort of fertilizer.

Oxford Co., Ont.

E. J. G.

Profiting by Mistakes of the Year.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

Although the year 1916 was a lean year it revealed many lessons for the wide-awake farmer. Probably the most noticeable was the benefit of tile draining. The tile this year not only took off the surplus moisture but it also prevented the land from cracking and baking later on. The crops also showed that four rods apart was not too close for parallel drains. Early-sown grains also showed up more favorably than the latter in most cases. For a crop like potatoes we intend in the future to make two plantings and reduce the risk of failure, such as the late planting produced this year.

This year also showed the advantage of having a summer silo or soiling crops to supplement the dry pastures. We decided next year to sow a three-acre field of peas, oats and clover and turn the cows on it about the first of July, if the pasture falls off if not we will cut it for grain. We could have a fair growth of aftermath clover if the pasture dries up later in August. Owing to the lack of silage or fodder corn we allowed the cows to fail in flesh and consequently in milk flow, even when feeding a liberal amount of hay night and morning on clover pasture. This shows the necessity of feeding grain or corn to the cows in the fall. The farmer who kept some oats in the granary from the 1915 bumper crop may also see the advantage of keeping hay in the mow from the 1916 bumper crop instead of pressing it for eight dollars a ton.

Middlesex Co., Ont.

NORMAN McCUTCHEON.

Broadcast the Seed in Wet Seasons.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

This has certainly been a very strange season. March was like April weather, April was like May, and May like April, and June like what May usually is. However, the season has gone and winter is here again. We cannot help but see some of the mistakes we made, and by noticing these mistakes, we ought to try and benefit by them.

One thing I learned from the wet seeding was not to try and get too large a field ready to sow at once. If the season is dry it is different, but if it is wet get part of the field ready, sow it, then go on with the rest. Another lesson learned from experience was, not to sow the grain too deeply. If I ever experience another season like the last I will sow the oats broadcast, for this reason: when I was drilling in one field last spring I missed a little corner by the fence. I took some seed out of the drill, scattered it broadcast and covered it with the harrow. That little corner was up two days earlier and was ahead of the rest all the season through. It stands to reason when the ground is wet and cold the nearer to the surface the grain is the more warmth and air it will receive.

Another point I learned was the importance of good, strong seed. If we ever needed good seed of strong germinating power it was last spring, and it ought to be a lesson to all of us to have our seed grain plump, well dried and of good color ready for next spring; and the sooner we secure what we expect to need so much the better. We could not help but see where tile drains were needed. We had little patches in some of our crops this year where a short tap of three-inch tile would have paid for themselves the one season. These points not only refer to the spring seeding but to the planting as well.

Elgin Co., Ont.

STEWART L. PEARCE.

Fall Plowing Essential.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

The past season has been the most difficult in years. The spring was wet so continually that low land could not be sown until June, while high and light land was seeded fairly early and gave a better crop, although the hot, dry summer reduced yields all round. The light land that was fall-plowed and seeded early certainly made the best showing as it had a good start before the drouth, which teaches us that the plowing should always be done in the fall if possible. Then there is a good chance to have it sown early. If the summer is dry it has a better chance, and if there is abundant rainfall all the better. Clay land that was fall-plowed, and well ridged up and water-furrowed made a noticeably better showing than the spring-plowed or poorly furrowed fields.

Farmers who took a lesson from last season and have their plowing done have better prospects for a good crop in 1917. They will be able to cultivate and sow as soon as the land is dry, so the corn and roots will not be delayed the way they were on most farms last spring. While cereal crops suffered severely the hardest hit by the drouth were the corn and roots. These crops got practically no rain when they should have done the bulk of their growing.

It was an excellent year to prove that constant cultivation retains the moisture and many farmers by so doing had fairly good corn. Mangels sown early on land that had been manured and plowed the fall before did fairly well. This should help us in preparation for the crop of 1917.

Bruce Co., Ont.

J. MORLEY HANBIDGE.

Make Improvements in Bad Weather.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

Last spring the land was very wet in most districts, and, as the spring was rather late, farmers were anxious to get their spring grain sown. The greatest difficulty confronting them was not being able to get on the land at all, and perhaps the next was having to work it so many times on account of the rain.

There were also a great many mistakes made, for instance, I know a neighbor who trailed his implements around in the wet ground, and when it came time for fall ploughing his land was so hard that the rain had hardly affected it. Then I noticed another mistake which was made on our own farm. Soon after the corn crop was sown there came a heavy rain that packed the ground, then when dry weather came it got so hard that cultivating was very difficult. I think it was a mistake not to loosen up the land after the rain, as it would not have hurt the corn but would have kept the ground much softer and moister.

When it was too wet to work the land many farmers would "hang around" the village telling stories. I think it would have been better for them to have spent more of their time trying to drain their wet fields, or in making improvements around their buildings.

Wentworth Co., Ont.

RAYMOND MCKNIGHT.

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