

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (HORTICULTURAL BRANCH).

COMMERCIAL POTATO-CULTURE.

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THE potato-crop as a commercial asset is steadily increasing in value in British Columbia. Up to a few years ago the production did not equal the home demand, imports coming from Ontario and the United States. The general quality and character of our product have long been recognized, and the recent victory which the British Columbia car-load attained in the New York National Irrigation Exposition over sixty-six other competitors from all parts of the United States and Canada has furnished striking confirmation of its superiority.

The Delta and bottom lands of the Lower Mainland produce very large yields of main-crop potatoes, which are consumed principally in the local Coast markets. The Ashcroft potato has long been justly famed for its high quality, and other Thompson River Valley points, with Ashcroft, are steadily increasing their output. Around Armstrong the production of early potatoes on the uplands has been made an especial study, while the river lands produce very large late crops. The early varieties produce 2 to 6 tons per acre, marketed at from \$25 to \$40 per ton; late ones running 8 to 11 tons per acre, at \$12 to \$22 per ton. Around Vernon, and especially in the Coldstream Valley, the potato-crop will average about 8 tons under irrigation, of high quality. In the Kelowna District both early and late potatoes are grown, the latter producing about 8 tons at selling prices quoted above. In the Grand Forks District a large car-load business is also developing, potatoes yielding 7 to 9 tons under irrigation, and 4 to 6 under dry-farming methods.

The potato market is one subject to peculiar and unforeseen fluctuations. Predictions as to crops and prices are more difficult to make in potatoes than with any other of the main or staple food crops. Generally speaking, the price received per acre leaves a good margin over the cost of production, but this is true more as an average of years than as a certainty every year.

Certain factors are peculiarly essential to success with potatoes as a main crop. The grower must stay with the game, year in and year out, so as to make good on the average. It is essential to secure varieties suitable to the district and to the market, and to have a good strain of seed of that variety. The grower must keep down the cost of production by the use of machinery and by intelligent management. The district must get into the car-load-shipping class, and be a factor in the market every year.

As a side-issue, the potato is one of the most profitable intercrops in the orchard, and for production in small areas by men engaged in fruit-