

TOMATOES AS A FIELD CROP.

GROWING THE PLANTS.

Tomato-seed should be sown in hotbeds or flats about the middle of March. It requires about 1 oz. of seed to produce enough plants for 1 acre. When the second leaf shows, the plants should be transplanted about 2 inches apart each way, into flats, and allowed to develop in these quarters until they have attained a height of 1 to 3 inches. They are then transplanted to about 4 inches apart each way in flats or into berry-boxes, pots, etc., and from these quarters to the field. In growing the young plants it is very important to keep the temperature fairly even, and not allow draughts to strike the plants. The less water used as long as the plants are growing well, the better. It is very important that the plants should be well hardened off before set in the open ground.

SOIL AND ITS PREPARATION.

Tomatoes if given proper treatment can be grown on almost any well-drained soil which is in good condition, but probably a rich, sandy loam will give the best results. The treatment of the soil previous to planting is very important. Tomatoes do well after clover-soil. The ground should be ploughed in the fall or early spring, and deeply cultivated in the spring.

FERTILIZERS.

Barnyard manure may be applied in the fall and ploughed under, or if well-rotted it might be applied as a top dressing in the spring and worked into the soil. Since the tomato belongs to the potash-consuming class of plants, the fertilizers used should be especially rich in potash. The commercial fertilizer used will be determined largely by the character, mechanical condition, and composition of the soil. However, it should generally contain a fair amount of potash.

SETTING AND CULTIVATING THE PLANTS.

The plants should be set in the field as soon as all danger of frost is over. If the plants are transplanted from flats to the field, cut the soil in the flat into cubes two or three days before removing the plants. Soak with water two or three hours before transplanting. If the plants are to be allowed to run over the ground, they should be set about 4 feet apart each way. If trimmed and tied to stakes, they may be planted in rows 3 feet apart, and 18 inches apart in the rows.

Tomatoes need thorough cultivation, but the first time should be deep, and all later cultivations should be shallow, as the plant is a surface feeder.

PRUNING AND TRAINING.

Tomato-plants under field cultivation are generally allowed to run over the ground in any direction. For early market it may be advisable to leave more than three sets of fruit. Even for the main crop it is advisable to take off all the small fruit and cut back the young shoots in the middle of August, especially if the plant is growing rapidly. Staking is often practised for early market. The stakes should be driven firmly into the ground 1 foot from the plants and the plants carefully tied to them, to keep them from being pulled over the ground and to expose the plants to the action of the sun for the