

SWEET POTATO CULTURE AT THE NORTH.

Many suppose that sweet potatoes cannot be grown in New England. I think they are in error; certainly they are as to some parts and soils, for I have known of others growing them; and as the potato bugs are so troublesome to the Irish potato, perhaps some farmer reader would like to know how to do it.

PLANTS.—If only a small patch is to be raised, plants are best obtained of those who grow and advertise them for sale; or they can be grown in the following way: Early in spring, according to latitude and season, put the potatoes in a hot-bed; if of large size, split lengthwise, laying the flat sides down close together; cover with about two inches of fine rich mold, the richer the better. When the plants show above ground, add another inch of fine soil. Water with warm water as occasion requires; protect the bed on cold nights, and give air and sunshine to make them hardy. When wanted for setting, uncover the potatoes and pull off the best slips, and recover to let all others improve.

SOIL AND PLANTING.—A warm, sandy soil with a good exposure is best, although heavier soils, if rich and exposed to the sun with protection from the cold will answer well. Mark the rows, which had best run north and south, 3½ feet apart; on these marks spread liberally, good barn manure, and then from each way turn a furrow over the manure to form a ridge eight or ten inches high, the base of which should not be disturbed by the operation, and should be not less than one foot wide; the top, when finished, three or four inches broad on which to set the plants. As soon as danger of frost is past, set the plants 15 or 18 inches apart in rows thus prepared; set the slips down to the first leaf pressing the soil close to them, especially around the roots. Moist weather is best for setting, but set at any time, well watered and shaded, they do nearly as well, sometimes better.

A close, hard bottom to the row induces the tubers to grow "chubby," less long and slim; for this purpose strips of sod are laid in the bottom, where only a few are grown as in the garden. Manure does not injure the sweet potato, as it often does the Irish, but for abundant production it should be used freely. After culture consists in keeping down weeds with hoe or rake, and hauling the soil upward to the plants. Keep the tops in a line on the top of the ridge, and free from taking root, admitting the sun to warm the ground.

GATHERING.—If a few are desired before the crop is ripe, you can run the finger down beside the vine, and when a large tuber is felt, detach it and replace the soil, leaving the rest to grow. A light frost kills the vines. Now is the time for gathering; select the first clear, dry day, and turn them out with the digger, first cutting and removing the vines; a sythe will answer for cutting these. Dig in the forenoon, and allow two or three hours to dry, with full exposure to sun and air; handle very carefully so as not to bruise or otherwise mar them. For preserving for late fall or winter use, provide suitable boxes or barrels, and take them to the field, having sufficient fine cut straw or chaff to pack or fill all interstices and