

## The Farm.

### ESSAY ON THE BEST METHOD TO FOLLOW FOR THE CULTURE OF EARLY AND LATE POTATOES.

*First prize at the Sherbrooke Show 1898.*

First, the land is to be in first-class condition and should dry early in the spring. Soils that will draw the heat early, such as sandy loam, gravelly soil, or limestone soil, are best fitted for potatoes. A rich soil is necessary so that the potatoes shall grow quick'y to be ready for early market, and a dry soil is necessary in order that it can be worked early in the spring. It should be plowed when dry in the fall and again in spring. If it is plowed when wet it is sure to harden and the potatoes will not grow so rapidly. It is advisable to plow the manure down in the fall, for while the land may be rich it always requires a little extra manure, say about fifteen or twenty cartloads per acre. If manure cannot be had in the fall, employ well-made manure in the spring, in the drills, for early potatoes only. What would also help would be about 150 or 200 lbs. of fertilizer per acre. (1)

Now comes an important point in the production of an early potato, viz: the selection of a good early variety. There are several very good varieties, such as: Early Rose, Early Ohio, Lee's Favorite, Early Gem, Early Puritan, Beauty of Hebron, Early Sunrise, etc. An exhausted potato, i.e. one which has been grown several years in succession in the same soil, should not be planted. Select the potatoes so that they shall be of a uniform size, four or five sets per potato, and not more than one or two eyes per sett. It is absolutely necessary that these potatoes should be put to sprout about six weeks before they are to be planted. Sprout them in a room on shelves and not more than one potato deep, seed end up, with plenty of windows for sun and light. When the room is dark the sprouts grow too long and thin. The light causes them to grow slower and stronger and gives them a green color. The temperature should be from about 55° to 62° or 63°. They can also be sprouted in the stable if the temperature and light are as above. When ready to plant, the potatoes are cut and put carefully into baskets and carried

to the field and planted one by one, so as not to break the sprouts off. Those with sprouts broken off should not be planted with the rest, for in digging time, they would not be ready with the others. They can be put to one side and planted in a drill by themselves. In cutting, always cut round the side and split the top or seed end, and if these are planted by themselves they will produce potatoes several days earlier than the others. In drilling for these early potatoes about 3 inches is the proper depth, but they can be covered much deeper. Four or five days after, they should be harrowed with the potato harrows. This gives them the heat of the sun by drawing the soil away. As soon as they are all nicely through the ground, pass a cultivator through them and hoe them all over thoroughly to move the soil about them. In two or three weeks, another cultivation and hoeing would benefit them by keeping the soil loose. To mould, the Planet jr. cultivator with double mould-boards is the best, or any similar cultivator with mould-boards, for the soil is thrown up looser than by the double mould-board plow. (1) But they should not be moulded up into a sharp peak, a little depression should be left in the centre to catch the rain and carry it down to the potatoes. (2) But bear in mind that the above working must be done when the land is in a good state for cultivation and not when it is too wet. In growing early potatoes a good deal can be done to keep up the richness of the soil. No person would take the trouble to sprout potatoes if he did not wish to have them ready for early market. They are generally sold during the month of July; the land should then be harrowed and the tops taken off, then plow and harrow well and it can be sown with a variety of seeds, such as; oats and vetches, 1½ bushels per acre of each, pease and oats, 1½ bushels each per acre, or early yellow or white turnips, 5 or 6 lbs. per acre broadcast. If the season is favorable any of the above will grow from 1 ft. to 1½ ft. high. In the fall have it well and properly plowed down, with a chain attached

(1) We cannot recommend earthing-up early potatoes. We always, from 1846, sprouted our sets as above and never gave more hoeing than needed to kill weeds. The crop, doubtless, was not so large as if the hoeing was more intense, but as we always had potatoes fit for the table on the 21st June, as long as we grew them in Canada, we think the practice was correct.—En.

(1) Dreadfully vague.—En.

(2) Very good indeed.—En.