



Fruit and Vegetable Production Combined

Mr. Taylor's young orchard, Rutland Benolt, B.O., in which onions were grown with marked success.

(Photo by G. H. E. Hudson, Kelowna, B.C.)

Forcing Rhubarb*

Claude Dyer, Canadian Trade Commissioner, Leeds, Eng.

ABOUT three-quarters of the total amount of forced rhubarb grown in the United Kingdom comes from within a radius of ten miles of Leeds. Formerly the proportion was even higher, but the methods of production in Leeds have been gradually extended to other parts of the country.

The annual crop in the Leeds rhubarb district is between twelve and fourteen thousand tons, and is valued at from \$650,000 to \$900,000. The amount of capital sunk in the industry is estimated at \$1,250,000. London takes the best quality and large quantities are bought by other cities. Considerable supplies are also exported to Germany and other countries.

The method of cultivation in force may be described for the benefit of growers in Canada. In its simple form the forcing process was merely one of surrounding each rhubarb root with a pot for the purpose of protecting it against the cold and excluding the light. The system has now been elaborated. In place of the crude environment of the pot, big sheds, some of them with a floor space of a thousand square yards, are used. Heat is supplied by coke fires and flues running the length of the shed, and the temperature can be scientifically regulated so as to ripen the rhubarb when it is required.

PROCESS OF FORCING RHUBARB

The forcing of rhubarb is carried on in winter, the season lasting from about October until March. Before being taken into the forcing shed the plant spends two or three years out in the open field gathering strength. It yields no crop

while out of doors; the stalks and leaves grow but are not gathered. Formerly this process of strength accumulation was considered wasteful, but experience has taught growers that leaves are essential to the building up of the plant. If the leaves are taken away the supply of carbonaceous matter is materially curtailed and the plant is deprived not merely of strength but also of the opportunity of gathering strength. The leaves and stalks are therefore now allowed to remain until they rot away. They are not, however, altogether wasted material, as the decayed matter proves useful to the soil. In this way fine productive roots are built up.

When the forcing season arrives these roots are plowed up, taken into the sheds and there planted close together. A large shed with an area of a thousand square yards will take the yield of anything from two to five acres, according to the weight of the roots. Light is entirely excluded from the sheds, and through its exclusion the forced rhubarb is given its distinctive delicate coloring. In a few weeks after planting, white shiny bulbs spring from the roots. These develop into brilliant yellow leaves, and at the end of six to eight weeks, the stalks, pink or crimson, are ready for pulling. The first roots are transferred from the fields to the sheds for forcing usually at the end of October and the crop is ready about Christmas. A second lot of roots then goes through the same process, and the produce is ready for marketing early in March.

The size of the rhubarb farms in the neighborhood of Leeds varies from a few acres up to fifty acres and over. About

six thousand roots are planted to an acre, and if such a quantity yields four thousand roots suitable for forcing, the grower is satisfied. Nowadays the roots are destroyed after yielding one crop of forced rhubarb, whereas, formerly they were replanted in the ground to be used again. The grower finds that if he forces the yield of two-thirds of his land he can replant it all from the crop upon the other third.

What Growers Say

When potato growers have large quantities of seed to be treated, formaldehyde gas, generated by the use of potassium permanganate, is the most practical disinfecting agent. Place seed tubers in bushel crates or shallow slat-work bins in a tight room. For each thousand cubic feet of space spread twenty-three ounces of potassium permanganate over the bottom of a large pail or pan in the centre of the room. Pour over this three pints of formalin, leave the room at once and allow it to remain closed for twenty-four or forty-eight hours. If one is obliged to plant scabby potatoes, one of the methods of disinfecting here recommended should be employed; but absolutely clean potatoes is a luxury which every farmer should enjoy.

Onion seed grown under certain conditions seems to develop thick necks. Our experiments conducted over two years show two definite causes for thick necks. One was climatic conditions and the second the date of sowing. For this climate one needs seed that will mature rapidly and the best time to sow is as soon as the ground will permit.—G. W. Baker, Tamblings, Ont.

In order to get the maximum results from storing any crop it is essential to have the crop well grown. In all cases, with the exception of tomatoes, celery and the like, which of necessity must be placed in storage in an unripe state, the produce to be stored should be ripe and sound.

In the early fall a good top dressing of hardwood ashes for the strawberry bed is most valuable. Beds supplied with this top dressing of ashes produce fruits of the finest possible flavor and color.—W. A. Dier, Ottawa, Ont.

One good result from transplanting celery is that the straight root or tap root is broken, causing a large mass of fibrous roots to be formed.—F. F. Reeves, Humber Bay, Ont.

When taking up celery plants in the fall they must be handled carefully so as not to break or bruise the stock, which hastens decay.—J. C. Black, Truro, N.S.

*Special report to the Department of Trade and Commerce, Ottawa.