

The Farmer

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Correspondence.

For the Colonial Farmer.

RURAL TOPICS.

COST OF GROWING POTATOES.

Speaking of producing a crop the right word to use is "growing," or "to grow," and not to raise, as is generally said, yet "to raise" is not absolutely an improper term, as it is applied to growing crops, but only loses proper when "to grow." Let us now see what it generally costs to grow (or to raise, if you prefer that word) a crop of potatoes on good fertile land, such as will produce from 100 to 200 bushels to the acre? I will address my testimony, and my first witness is a writer in the *Country Gentleman*, who says: "The work should be done mostly by horses with labor-saving implements. The land to be in good condition, must be free from seeds of weeds, so as to require no hand-weeding; but to admit of frequent horse-cultivation; and it should be deep and friable enough to facilitate easy planting and easy digging. It must of course be well under-drained either naturally or artificially, especially if inclining to clay; and it should be deep enough to hold moisture in time of drought. A case was met with a few years ago, showing the value of a deep soil, where a row of potatoes was planted on a covered drain, and the season being dry, it yielded nearly double the amount from parallel rows; the mellowed subsoil in drying the drain making all this difference."

There are some points upon which there are different opinions, but that end and drop the seed, and cover it to one operation; but they are more or less defective, and I think that farmers had better cut the seed by hand, as is generally customary, and drop it by hand. The seed may be cut on a rainy day, and a man and two boys (or girls, if you please), will drop and cover an acre a day, the seed from one to fifteen inches apart, the drills. The covering to be done with a single horse plow, six inches deep when the ground is levelled. This should be done when the potatoes are beginning to appear where the ridges made in covering are covered down about twenty days after planting. It may be done with a smoothing harrow, but with teeth, without any injury to the potatoes; or turn a common harrow over with the teeth up, and load it with one or two large stones, and then harrow across the rows, and the work will be well done, the land made smooth, all weeds destroyed, and the potatoes just coming up. The entire after-cultivation should generally be done with a horse, first perhaps with a cultivator, if the ground is hard, or very weedy, to be followed at the proper time with a horse hoe, and hilling the potatoes just enough to cover the weeds among them; and the digging should be done with a potato-digger, or a plow. The writer quoted above says: "On light soils the digging may be performed by any of the cheaper diggers, which are made with prongs projecting in the rear of the plow; the soil being thrown to the rear of the surface. On heavy or adhesive soils, none of these implements work well, and we use a common plow, running just deep enough to invert the potatoes, picking up all this brought in again, and bringing the rest to the surface with a common harrow. By a little practice, this mode makes clean gathering, not half a bushel per acre remaining in the soil. Two men usually harvest fifty bushels a day."

It is not possible to give any detail of cost of growing a acre of potatoes, that will apply to all cases, as it costs more in some soils than in others; and some farmers have better implements than others; but the following estimate is not far from being correct in most cases:

Plowing one acre of land	\$2.50
Harrowing and sowing	1.00
Planting and covering	1.00
Cultivating three times	3.00
On heavy or adhesive soils	2.00
Digging and covering	1.00
Total	\$10.50

To this should be added one-half the value of any manure applied to the land, as half of its virtues may be charged to succeeding crops; and if you please, you may add interest on the value of the land. I am sure that any farmer may do all the work for an acre of potatoes, as above stated, for \$15; and in some cases, the potatoes will not cost over fifteen cents a bushel, while the average will not even when a good dressing of manure is applied, be over twenty-five cents per bushel. In some places, as at the west, where they grow from 300 to 400 bushels per acre, the cost is not over five cents per bushel.

VARIETIES TO PLANT, MANURE, ETC.
It is a fact that the best variety now grown is the Snowflake. It is a

variety that matures in September in New Jersey—being neither early nor late. Then there is the Early Rose, Late Rose, Peerless, Brown's Beauty, and Compton's Surprise, all very fine. In regard to fertilizers, stable dung is good enough, but when commercial fertilizers are used, potash should predominate. A dealer in such fertilizers, who undoubtedly has done his best to ascertain what formula produces the best crops, gives the following for one acre:

Ground Bone, 200 lb.	\$2.00
Superphosphate, 100 lb.	1.00
Sulphate of Ammonia, 20 lb.	1.00
Sulphate of Soda, 10 lb.	1.00
Best Plaster, 100 lb.	1.00
Total	\$6.00

Here the actual potash (137 lb.) is the largest constituent in pounds but not in cost. Another dealer gives the following formula for 1,000 lbs. of potatoes:

Sulphate of Ammonia, 10 lb.	1.00
Sulphate of Soda, 10 lb.	1.00
Best Plaster, 100 lb.	1.00
Total	\$3.00

Probably the second formula is designed for an acre of land, but both are enough for two acres each, and I give these formulas only to show what commercial fertilizers are recommended for potatoes, which is of interest to farmers if they never expect to buy any.

SEEDING CLOVER WITH OATS.
Laid may be seeded to clover with oats in the spring, but the oats should not be sown very thick. A farmer in Western New York says: "Having never tried the experiment, as we always sowed with wheat, I will state the successful results of a neighbor who wished to seed down his entire acre, but being unable to do so with wheat, he-half being in sowed clover, he was obliged to seed with oats the coming spring. The other part of the lot was in oats, and then put to wheat. The land was in good condition, having had two crops of wheat and a crop of clover and timothy. It was put in good order, by careful plowing and cultivating, then rolled. The clover seed was sown about the middle of May, just in advance of the grain till when sowing oats, which covered the seed. I could see no difference between the clover after wheat and the part after oats. Both completely covered the ground, blossomed the same year, and were successful. I am not in favor of the practice, as it shades the ground more than wheat, rye or barley."

PRESERVING FENCE POSTS.
I copy the following from an English paper: "The proper seasoning of timber before being used in any sort of structure is far more important than the seasoning of the wood when it is felled, kind of timber used, or preservatives employed. There are paints, washes and heterogeneous steeps recommended for preserving posts; but each is comparatively costly, and I should recommend with fencing posts the application of solutions externally rests on the fact that the sap being confined, accelerates decomposition in the interior. Most foresters must have observed this. What I would recommend with fencing posts is—the materials, when felled, to be directly sawn into posts and stored under sheds thoroughly ventilated, where they will remain at least a year exposed to sun and wind. The neck or part between wind and water of each post should be slowly charred over a strong fire—slowly, because our principle means heating the timber thoroughly to the heart, so as to destroy any moisture which may be left lodged in the centre, and hardening a crust on the surface of the posts. Afterwards, to prevent the posts absorbing water, they should be well coated with coal tar, having its acid destroyed with fresh quicklime. The tar should be thoroughly boiled, to evaporate all watery matter, and applied boiling hot. A large tank holding the posts set on end, and filled with the scalding tar from a boiler, answers the purpose very well. Of course, the upper half of the posts can be painted when placed, in situ. I am fully convinced coal tar, properly applied to thoroughly seasoned timber, is far more effectual in preserving posts than creosote, poisoning kyanizing, &c."

Miscellaneous.
A lady in London got the idea into her head that the devil was in her, and hung herself. If women go to hanging themselves for a little thing like that, they are going to be scarce.

A Pennsylvanian had gained holiday for the whole school by dropping his rubbers down the heater, and evence he has been engaged at dropping them one at a time.

A clothier has excited public curiosity by having a large apple painted on his sign. When asked for an explanation, he inquired: "If it

hadn't been for an apple, where would the ready-made clothing stores be today?"

The first umbrella appeared in England in the year 1777; but history does not inform us when the first umbrella disappeared, and who carried it off. Almost any man can tell about what time the last umbrella disappeared.

An Irishman who had commenced building a wall round his lot, of uncommon dimensions, viz., four feet high and six feet thick, was asked the object by a friend. "To save repairs; don't you see if it ever falls down, it will be higher than it is now."

The Way to Fall.
Many I have known to fall in horse gardening because they commence at the top of the ladder instead of the bottom, and I thought it best that they should be told this fact. A lady has seen beautiful flowers in her neighbors' gardens, and resolved to have flowers next season. (I have a friend particularly in my mind.) Her friend says she wants the very best, and she pulled in the papers, perhaps by editors who know nothing of the matter, or advertised by some seedsmen, wonderful seedling, from Japan, Timbuctoo, or some other outlandish place. This must be obtained at any cost. All the money that can be spared is invested in a few of these new and wonderful things. The fancy seeds are committed to the ground with a feeling of exaltation. The neighbors, perhaps, have not heard of these wonderful acquisitions, and will open their eyes pretty wide when the flowers appear in their glory, and they find their flowers and garden left entirely in the shade. As usual, a fall follows pride. Half of the new things not being adapted to our climate, never reach a flowering stage; others are only slightly different in color or form from varieties we possess; very interesting, perhaps, to the first, or even the curious and experienced amateur, but of no use to the beginner. The good old Asterus and Saxifraga, and Primula and Dianthus, and any one who grows, were neglected, and disappointment is the result. My advice is commence with a few simple hardy things, and not too many. Do what you do thoroughly. One little bush with a dozen good plants is a delight; a whole garden full of started, neglected things, is a misery. I know you have always taught this. I learned it from your works. It needs repeating.—*Vicks Monthly.*

Culture of Potatoes.
As many are giving their experience on raising potatoes, I will give mine. Although my ground is plowed in the fall, I plow it again in the spring. I then harrow it until it is very mellow. With a plowker I then make it very smooth and level, and cut any one grow, were neglected, and disappointment is the result. My advice is commence with a few simple hardy things, and not too many. Do what you do thoroughly. One little bush with a dozen good plants is a delight; a whole garden full of started, neglected things, is a misery. I know you have always taught this. I learned it from your works. It needs repeating.—*Vicks Monthly.*

FEATHERING WITH CHARCOAL.
The owner of a large vineyard on Kelley's Island writes me that a neighbor of his had a large grape vine growing out far from an old cistern which was filtering a stagnant fluid with charcoal, and a root of the vine, having found its way into the charcoal, filled the entire mass with its ramifications; the effect on the growth and productivity of the vine was very noticeable. He intends, therefore, to try some experiments with powdered charcoal as a fertilizer. It is probable, however, that in the case of the cistern the charcoal was saturated with filtering liquid, and hence comparatively little benefit may result from the application of charcoal unless mixed with richer ingredients. Saturating it with water, in which manure is dissolved, would doubtless be very effective. —*Correspondence Country Gentleman.*

BLIND STAGGERS IN SWINE.
Hogs, like horses, are subject to the blind staggers, and are suddenly taken down, and staggering, and in a short time go into spasms, especially if they are near a body of water. This disease makes are having among swine where it prevails, and no farmer should be ignorant of a remedy to apply when needed. Cold water frequently dashed on the head, the administration of cathartics and infusions of turpentine and oil is one kind of treatment recommended, and we know of no better. But in treating the disease, particular attention must be given to the dieting of the animal—a wild lettuce diet being required for some time after the staggers begins to recover and regains an appetite for food.—*Factory and Farm.*

BEALMAS NOT GREAT MATTERS.
I often read articles in the papers from men who have had little or no experience in keeping Brahmas fowls, stating that they are great matters. As I have bred Brahmas since 1864, I claim to know something about what it costs to feed them, and this winter's feed for fifty full grown light Bealmas is a fair estimate for any season. I feed daily seven quarts of corn and wheat screenings, half of each and nothing else. My fowls on this quantity of feed often get too fat to lay well and then I cut down the quantity for a few weeks.

Before I procured the Brahmas, I kept the ordinary dunghill fowls and I never could keep them on less than a gill of grain a day on an average, or about three hundred and sixty-five gills per fowl per year, being a bushel and a peck per year. Riting seven quarts of grain daily for fifty full grown Brahmas, it amounts to fifty-one quarts a year for each fowl, or a little over a bushel and a half per fowl, and I may safely say that the

quantity of feed required by all the small breeds of fowls is about a bushel and a half a year.

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Winter Management.
As a general thing when poultry of any description run at large, they are able to supply themselves with the necessary variety of diet which they require. We have no idea what an amount of garbage they hunt out and scratch over, finding something in each deposit that they desire to eat. They devour an immense quantity of what we might term "wasteful" food, and yet the fowls do better to have their runs, and hunt on these more or less choice to them. A large proportion

of their food consists of vegetable matter. The latter is necessary and indispensable to health. Everything that feeds largely on grain requires something to bulk, to distend the stomach, and keep the digestive organs in good working order, otherwise the bird or the animal cannot thrive. Winter management of poultry is no small item if we are judiciously inclined, and have an eye to some income, no matter how small, from our hens. So long as the winter is open and the ground uncovered from snow, the fowl will in a great measure neglect themselves, and if well fed and supplied with water, will give a fair yield in eggs, but it often occurs in our northern localities that the ground is covered with snow, for three and sometimes four months during the winter season. 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