

autumn. With a pair of shears, cut off the first growth by the last of June, and do not let any pods mature excepting those especially desired for seed. It ruins pansies to let them seed plentifully in September and October. Those who gather these flowers with lavish hands for themselves and their friends, always succeed best in their culture, for their plants will constantly send forth fresh buds and flowers. There are no flowers more beautiful for parlor decoration, for the dinner table and for bouquets than pansies. Their odors are not overpowering, and yet are delicious. A basket filled with pansies is a pleasing gift to every one.—S. O. J. in *Country Gentleman*.

MULCHING POTATOES.

MR. EDITOR.—Noticing in the April number an account of some experiments with potatoes, one of which was the application of a mulch or covering of straw, instead of cultivating the ground in the ordinary manner, it occurs to me that your readers may be interested in a short article on the subject which I send you, clipped from the *Farmer and Fruit Grower*. It is written by a resident of the State of Illinois. He says:—

It might be of some interest to give the mode of mulching practiced for the past twenty years in this and adjoining counties; and here at the outset let me say that for early potatoes it is best not to mulch (or straw them, as we say), for the reason that the straw keeps the ground cold and damp, and that is a hindrance to early maturity of the potato, as early in the season the ground is cool and moist, but for potatoes planted later, mulch is required or is beneficial.

It often occurs here on the flat lands in this part of the State that we are kept back from planting potatoes (by wet weather) until what would be late in the season, say well up in April. Then is mulching profitable, as the heat is becoming greater and we mulch to keep the ground cool. As to

planting, prepare the ground in the best order by plowing deep and manuring. The ground should be laid off to drain; that is, the rows should run up and down the ridge so as to carry off the surplus water, as no water should be allowed to stand on the ground.

To lay off the rows, use a large shovel plow, making the furrows four inches deep. The plow should be run deeper than that for part of the dirt will fall in after the plow, so have the opening four inches deep and furrows two feet apart or closer if possible. Plant the seed 15 inches apart in the row, then throw two furrows on them, forming a ridge over them. If properly done, there will be no middle furrow left between the ridges.

After they have lain about one week, take a stout pole twelve feet long, hitch a horse to the middle of it, and drag it over the rows like a harrow, letting the horse walk between the rows. This will flatten the ridges some, and destroy all young weeds starting. Now they are ready for the straw or mulch, which should be spread all over the ground from 6 to 10 inches deep. Dry straw is the best, but if it is wet it should not be put on so deeply, as it lies solid. You need not be afraid of the young plants not coming through, as every plant that starts will make its way through. Some defer putting on the straw until the plants begin to show, but I think it is much better to put the straw on before plants come through the ground, as then they come right on.

If enough straw has been put on, no weeds will trouble you through the season. Then there is nothing more to do but wait for the harvest. It is more laborious to plant an acre this way than the old way, but it is far surer, and a much larger yield is obtained—nearly double—and when the tubers have ripened they do not take the second growth, but may lay till late in the fall, until there is danger of a freeze. Indeed, we often have seen them keep under the straw this way till spring.

When the crop is to be taken up, the straw must be forked off to one side. We usually take up the potatoes with a four-pronged fork, and they come out nice and clean.

A word about the straw. It is in the very best condition now for covering