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## The Best Method of Storing Vegetables

Written for "The Western Home Monthly" by Helen E. Vialoux

**T**HE out-of-doors root cellar is undoubtedly an ideal method of storing all root vegetables, and a cellar constructed on a side-hill or dug in the first bank of a river, keeps the vegetables perfectly until May or June. However, most people keep their garden produce in the house cellar or basement in the country. A cellar is really better than a basement room that usually has a furnace in it, and the temperature and humidity are difficult to control.

As I keep bees in the basement I needs must have good ventilation. Therefore a window is always open from one inch to six inches as the weather permits. Potatoes and roots keep much better because the bees must have fresh air.

Select a suitable portion of the cellar as far as possible from the furnace. Board it up, using felt paper to cover the rough boards on both sides to exclude the artificial heat from the furnace. A false floor is a wise precaution for a potato-bin. If not available use some clean straw or rough hay as a litter on the cement floor. A sprinkle of air-slaked lime on the floor is advisable if there is dampness. Potatoes are better sorted into bins when first stored and the wise farmer or gardener picks out the most perfect seed potatoes he can get in the fall, storing them by themselves.

This season the potato crop is poor and the tubers are immature in many gardens. Care should be taken to have them clean and dry before they are stored. The best temperature for a root cellar is 35 to 40 degrees F., but most of our basement rooms average 40 to 50 degrees F. The thermometer will show. But the vegetables keep well with a circulation of fresh air. Beets, carrots, parsnips and turnips all dry out too quickly in the basement. The only way to keep them fresh is to pack them in builder's sand in bins or boxes, but the outdoor cellar is much the best for them. Leave some parsnips in the garden until the ground thaws in the spring. They are delicious in April, but should not be allowed to "grow" again in the soil, as they then become poisonous.

Onions keep better in the attic providing they are protected from frost. Keep them in crates or spread out on a floor. Marrows or squash or pumpkins also are better in a dry atmosphere and can be stored until February quite easily. Cabbage may be kept on slatted shelves in a cool basement, or kept by taking off the outer leaves and wrapping in newspaper, then packed in a barrel or box. This method I find the most successful, and cauliflower will keep a couple of months stored the same way.

Cabbage may be pulled by the root and hung up by the said root in a

common cellar on hooks, where it keeps fairly well.

Tomatoes may be kept late in the season by pulling up the vines covered with green tomatoes and hanging them in a cellar. The tomatoes do not rot or wither so quickly as they get some sustenance from the vines for a time, and ripen nicely. Fill a few paper bags with green tomatoes, tie the tops and hang them in a cool cellar. They will be a treat in a few weeks. Fresh and ripe cucumbers will keep a month or so only, in a cool place, but cucumbers, string beans and cabbage may be kept in kegs or crocks, putting in a layer of vegetables and a layer of salt. Cover with a plate and weight. They make their own brine and must be kept under this to prevent them moulding. If too dry in a couple of days make some brine of salt and water and add to the cucumbers. When needed place in fresh water for a day or so.

In some parts of Russia kegs of cucumbers are packed with a very little salt and placed in a running stream, the spot marked. After the freeze-up the ice is chopped out over the keg and the Russian peasants have fresh cucumbers for dinner.

Some rhubarb roots should be dug up before winter sets in. Place them in a handy spot where they will freeze solid. Leave them frozen a couple of weeks, then place the roots in a box or in a cellar corner, cover them with sod, damp moss, or even coal ashes. Soon lovely pink stalks will be thrown out for six or eight weeks from the roots, until they become exhausted. The temperature should be between 50 and 60 degrees F. The darker the corner the better. Needless to say, the rhubarb is most delicate and delicious.

Who does not enjoy fresh parsley and mint in the winter? This may be kept growing by digging up a couple of roots in September from the garden and planting them in a grape basket, using good soil. Place in a sunny window in basement or house and the parsley will grow all winter.

Celery is not very easily kept in a basement owing to the lack of moisture. A good deep box filled with sand in which the celery roots are closely packed gives the best results. If the cellar room is very dry, a watering-can will sprinkle the plants and keep them moist and fresh.

No vegetable that has been touched with frost can be stored satisfactorily as decay will set in almost at once. If celery gets touched on the top by frost in October it will not store well, and yet it should be kept out in the garden as long as possible with safety.

Seventy-five per cent. of our garden produce can be stored in one way or another to tide us over the long winter. The more vegetables we give our families the better health they will enjoy.



Wild life, near Ingolf, Ont.