

THE CANADA FARMER



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The Field.

Lifting and Storing Potatoes.

The potato crop this year will be a large one, and it is an important item to the farmer how to lift, stow away, and preserve this crop in a safe and economical manner. The price will undoubtedly be low, so low as to be looked upon as discouraging by the grower; but with a heavy crop even low prices are remunerative, if the potatoes do not have to be carried too far to market; and where there is no sale to be had at fair prices at or near the farm, it pays well to turn them into money by feeding out to stock, in order to convert them into pork, beef or mutton. Any stock will readily eat potatoes, and fatten on them, if hay be given in addition. The low price this year will also stimulate their use for some other purposes, such for instance as the manufacture of grape-sugar, to be afterwards made into beer or brandy.

The time for taking up potatoes is as soon as they are ripe, and that is known by the top being dead and the skin firm. To leave them longer in the ground would be useless, and involve the risk of frosts and of sprouting, should the crop ripen early, and the weather prove warm and damp afterwards.

It would be a great help to the farmer if this, as well as other root crops, could be harvested by machinery, but as yet inventive genius does not seem to have been turned in this direction. A large, cumbersome, complicated machine for lifting and gathering potatoes has been constructed and tried in New Jersey, but though it answers in the light sandy soils, with men who make a specialty of raising large crops of potatoes for the New York and Philadelphia markets, it would be too

costly for the ordinary farmer, nor would it answer in stiff soils. We give a cut in another column of a very simple and cheap potato plough, that is spoken highly of in the States, though it has not yet, to our knowledge, found its way into Canada. On most farms, an ordinary plough, if very clean and bright, and having the coulter removed, and the point somewhat long and depressed, will answer well to throw out the potatoes. If run exactly at the right depth, and with a slow team, most of the potatoes will be turned out so near the surface that a kick of the foot by the picker as he goes along will turn them up to view. After the crop has been once picked over, the ground is to be harrowed lengthwise, pickers following the harrow, and again crosswise, after which what few potatoes may be left in the soil will be devoured by the store hogs, if they are turned in as soon as the crop is removed.

When being picked, the crop should be put in small heaps, of about fifty bushels each, and left to dry for a few days, care being taken to cover at night with the potato stalks, to keep out frost. In no case should the crop be stored away except when the tubers are dry.

Cellars or root houses are generally as good places as one can get for storing away potatoes, if they are frost-proof, and can be well ventilated. Put the potatoes in large boxes—empty dry goods cases are the best, holding from fifteen to fifty bushels each—or divide the space into bins like those of a granary, so that each kind can be kept separate, and no great amount of heating can take place where there is space for ventilation. A board floor is better than bare earth. Choice kinds it will pay to sort over in the field, barrel the best for sale and delivery as required, and keep the others for seed. When a frost-proof room in a building

cannot be had, select a piece of dry soil, where water will readily flow off, or can be drained away. Store the potatoes in small round heaps, of fifty bushels each, set in rows, each to be covered first with reversed sods, or a very little clean dry straw, and then with earth, putting on at first but a few inches, and adding more as the weather gets colder, till hard freezing takes place. About two feet of earth will keep out frost. A good ditch is to be made round the lot of heaps, so as to carry off quickly all water that may fall. The heaps when covered should be somewhat cone-shaped, with sides high and sloping enough to carry off rain quickly. The main point in storing potatoes is to have them put away dry and in such a manner as will keep out moisture, and at the same time run little risk of the whole rotting, should rot set in at any point, or with any one kind, some being more liable to rot than others.

If the crop can be sold off the ground in the fall at 40 to 60 cents per bushel, it will pay better to sell than to keep them over winter.

FORESTS AND THE FALL OF RAIN.—A sugar planter at the Hawaiian Island adopted, in 1860, a new way to raise the wind and to make the clouds drop rain. Having a large quantity of arid land and no streams of water within reach, he set his wits to work to bring the moisture from the mountain down on to his plantation. For this purpose he planted 50,000 forest trees, which, under his care, grew rapidly. Soon the clouds hung over the new forest and the rain came down abundantly. Cisterns were built which held about 30,000 barrels of water, and this resource insures the planter against destructive droughts. He has now a very flourishing sugar plantation, but he has made it out of a dry plain, which without water would have very little value.