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A Part of the Fine Stables at "Allancroft Farm," Beaconsfield, near Montreal.

How We Handle the Potato Crop

Cultur I Methods That Have Resulted in Profitable Yields-By Tom Alfalfa

NE hundred bushels to the acre is the normal potato crop in the normal season. This is the average of all crops, good and bad. Contrast the average with the possible. As high as 1,000 bushels has been dug off a single acre; 500 bushels from an acre is achieved frequently every season, and 300 bushels to the acre is the regular thing with some growers, if the season is at all favorable. When we first started to grow potatoes on our farm, we occasionally had poor crops. We learned by experience. We paid for that experience, and now we are in a position where we can insure ourselves a good crop in almost any season. Last season was the most difficult one in many years. The spring was wet and cold, and was succeeded immediately by weather that was very hot and dry; two extremes and neither one favorable to the potato crop. Naturally our crop was below normal, but by following the methods that I shall endeavor to outline, we had much the best crop in a neighborhood where potatoes are commonly grown.

Whenever possible we follow our potatoes afterclover. Never would we grow potatoes on the same land for several years in succession. Potates demand a rotation of crops. No crop is more subject to disease and these diseases, such as blight and scab, live over in the soil, and if the potate crop is continued on the same land, become more prevalent with every passing year. We plow the clover sod m the fall and then surface work the land as much as time permits. The more the land is worked in the fall the better, During the fall and winter we spread 12 to 15 loads of larnyard manure per acre. Then we plow again in the spring.

We emphasize the spring plowing. It should never be omitted. And again we work the land very thoroughly.

Two Methods of Seeding.

There are two systems of seeding. Both are good. Under the first system the potato spuds are dropped every 15 to 15 inches in every third furrow during the spring plowing. When the planting is done in this way we would advise disking the soil before plowing. There is then loose soil on top of the furrows which when turned over, will settle in around the potato set and give more congenial growing conditions. Then the and is thoroughly worked on top with the disk and drag harrow.

The second system, and the one that we now follow, calls for plowing first and then a thorough working of the surface to a depth of three or four inches with the riding cultivator, disk and drag harrows. We never get in a hurry with this work. The soll is harrowed and reharrowed until it is of uniform tilth over the whole field. Then we turn out furrows with the plow about four inches deep and 32 inches apart. A good brand of mixed fertiliser is then apread by hand along the drill at the rate of 600 to 500 lbs, to the acre, and the seed is dropped in on top of the fertilizer, 15 inches apart

in the driff. Each seed piece as it is dropped is pressed down into the soil with the toe. Then we harrow crosswise of the drills once, covering the seed sets to a dep'h of two inches. One harrowing does not level the field. There will be a considerable mound between each row of potatoes. The Seed covered shallow in this way, however, gets a maximum amount of warmth. In case of rain the soil dries out more quickly and the potato makes a vigorous start. In a few days we harrow again, this time going lengthwise of the drill. This to avoid covering the sets too deeply. When the potatoes are just about through the ground we harrow crosswise again and repeat the harrowing at frequent intervals until the potatoes are four or five inches high. Then we start the scuffler going between the rows and scuffle every week or 10 days through the growing season, ridging very slightly as the season advances until the plants cover the ground completely.

Importance of Continual Harrowing.

It will be noticed that the drag harrow plays a very important part in our potato culture. We consider it the best implement on the farm of serve moisture and kill weeds. If the soil gets a chance to harden around the hills, and it will almost inevitably do this if a crust is allowed to form on the surface, the potatoes cannot grow and develop properly. This is especially true on heavy soil. Where the field is harrowed fro-

quently during the early stages of growth, there is little danger of such a crust forming, as the ground between the hills will be well shaded by the vines, shortly after the scuffler is stopped. Last year, for instance, one of our neighbors planted his field with a potato planter and faithfully scuffled it all season. He had a nice mulch between the rows, but along the drill between the potato plants a hard crust formed, the soil baked solid, and when I was on the field just before digging the potatoes had actually cracked the soft in their efforts to grow, but naturally the crop did not amount to much. A harrowing or two earlier in the season could have avoided this. As a result of our harrowing, too, we have very little to do with the hoe to keep the weeds down, though we usually go through the prop twice during the season. It takes only one good healthy pig weed or lambs' quarter in close proximity to a hill of potatoes to reduce the product by one-half.

Will Use Small Seed.

I suppose we are approaching this subject backward when we mention the seed last of all. For our last season's crop, we used our best selected seed. Prices this last winter have been so good that we have yielded to temptation and sold almost all of our good marketable potatoes. We will use the small potatoes for seed as probably thousands of other farmers will also do. These small potatoes have the same inherent power as the large potatoes from the same hills, and we expect practically, if not altogether, as good a crop as we would get from select specimens. We would not care to follow up this practice of planting small potatoes, however. Next year we will again select the best potatoes from the best hills for seed. We expect good results from our seed this year, too, from the fact that our vines were nice and green last season right up to the time that they were cut down by frost. The potatoes, therefore, are not so mature and dead ripe as is often the case, and they will make better seed on that account. The smallest of the seed will be planted whole.

Blight has not been common in our section, and we do not spray for it. We do, however, keep a sharp lookout for bugs and spray just as soon as we see the first evidences of their appearance. As a bug preventiative we have gotten better results from a poison in powder form, put up by a local miller than we have been getting from Paris green. Also two applications is sufficient.



The Oldest Exhibits in the Dairy Test at the Last Ontario Provincial Winter Fair. Mr. Henry Weish, Weston, Ont. had already passed his slotted three score and ten when he becemes an schibitor of pure bred Holstein cattle. His define the first time he appeared at Guelph. Last Descenproduced 16.8 bis of milk testing 1.95 fact. Mr. Weish and his of are are here seen as photographed by an editor of Farm and Dairy.

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