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## Cultural Studies on the Montreal Market Muskmelon\*

Prof. Wm. Stuart, Burlington, Vt.

THE commercial culture of the Montreal melon is confined almost wholly to a small group of growers near Montreal, Canada. While a large proportion of these melons are marketed in Boston, New York, Philadelphia and other large eastern United States cities at extremely remunerative prices, practically no effort is being made by United States gardeners to meet this demand. Notwithstanding the fact that the Montreal growers have for the past few years received from ten to eighteen dollars a dozen wholesale for their melons, they have not as yet succeeded in supplying the demand. The writer was informed five years ago by one of the best growers that he had a ten year contract with a leading New York City hotel, which agreed to take every first class melon he raised. This particular case is cited in order to disclose the keen demand which exists among high-class hotels and restaurants for this variety of melon during the season in which it is on the market.

The high prices which these melons command and their restricted production notwithstanding the high prices, are doubtless due to the fact that greater skill is demanded and closer attention to detail is necessary to success than when other varieties are grown. Furthermore, glass sash and frames are needed. Then, again, the Montreal grower confidently believes that this particular sort of melon can be successfully grown only on certain types of soil on the island of Montreal. This belief seems to have this much basis in fact, that while occasionally grown elsewhere high flavored melons have not commonly been produced save by Montreal growers; indeed, flavor has usually been lacking.

The crop is a remunerative one, when conditions favor. From \$1,500 to \$2,500 per acre are not unusual returns. Fair estimates of an average crop at \$250 per acre, with operating expenses, including interest on investment and depreciation, of \$890. One grower informed the writer that his average sales from seven to eight acres was in the vicinity of \$16,000.

### CULTURAL METHODS

Briefly stated the cultural methods employed by the Montreal growers are essentially as follows: The seed is sown in

seedbeds or pots, in the greenhouse or hotbed, any time from the latter part of February to the first of April. When the seedlings of the earlier sowings are large enough they are potted up into three or four inch pots, and, in the case of extremely early plantings, are again shifted into fives' and sixes'. Whenever these plants are in danger of suffering for lack of root space and plant food and the weather is favorable they are planted out in the sash-covered frames under which they are expected to remain until they are almost fully grown. The writer was informed by one of the largest and most successful growers that he planted seed for his first crop in the latter part of February or first of March.

The hotbeds in which these early plants are started must of necessity be well constructed, and in addition must be so located as to be well exposed to the sun's rays and at the same time protected from cold winds. This grower in addition to having well constructed hotbeds, covers his frames with two sets of sash, mats, and board shutters. With such protection, if sufficient horse man-

ure has been used in the hotbed to generate a steady and fairly strong bottom heat and the exposed portions of the frame are banked with the same material, plants may be grown almost as well as in a more expensive structure supplied with fire heat. In fact, most of the growers seem to be strongly prejudiced against the use of plants started in an artificially heated greenhouse structure, claiming that plants so started never give as satisfactory results as do those which have been grown in the hotbed. To the writer this prejudice seems to be ill founded. At least, no good reason suggests itself why greenhouse grown plants, if properly handled, should not make satisfactory growth when transplanted into the soil of the frames in which they are to be grown.

The frames into which the melons are transplanted are movable ones, usually in sections of approximately twelve feet in length by six feet in width. For the early crops they are made strong and tight with the rails for each sash to slide upon.

The soil over which these sections are



A Manure Trench as Prepared for the Growth of Montreal Muskmelons

\*Extract from Bulletin No. 169, of the Vermont Agricultural Experiment Station, Burlington, Vt.