

GROWING RHUBARB IN THE CELLAR

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MOST farmers who have a garden at all usually have a good supply of the old fashioned pie plant or rhubarb. This vigorous growing plant provides a wholesome substitute for fruit early in the spring before strawberries come in. It is not generally known, however, that it can be made to produce its crop in an ordinary cellar during the winter, when it would be probably more appreciated than when grown in the usual way in the garden in the spring. The accompanying illustration shows the growth in March of a couple of roots in an ordinary vegetable cellar, after half the crop had been pulled.



FIG. 2700. RHUBARB GROWN IN A CELLAR.

The rhubarb plant makes its most vigorous growth under natural conditions early in the spring, when its large leaves store up in the thick fleshy roots a large amount of nutriment for the production of seed during the summer and growth early next season.

To get the best roots for forcing it is well to allow the plants to make their full growth with little or no cropping of the leaves the previous season, and above all not to allow them to exhaust themselves by throwing up seed stalks. The more liberally the plants are manured and the better they are cultivated the stronger the roots become and the better the crop they will give when forced in the cellar.

In preparing the roots for the cellar they should be dug up late in the fall just before the ground freezes hard. They should then be left where they will be exposed to severe freezing for three or four weeks. If placed under cover in an open shed, or where they will not be buried in snow, it will be all the easier to get at them when it is time to take them to the cellar. About Christmas time they may be put in the cellar and should be banked with earth to keep the roots moist. Care should be taken that the plants are set right side up, as at that time it is sometimes difficult to tell which side of the ball of earth the crowns are on. In the course of a few days the roots will thaw out, and usually enough moisture is thus given off to keep them fresh for some time. They should be watched, however, as they may need water once or twice during the winter to keep the soil moist. The warmer the cellar, the more quickly growth will start, and for the best results a rather low temperature, about the same as that in which potatoes are kept, is best. In a partially lighted cellar the leaf blades will expand very little, and all the strength of the root will go to the development of the stalks. If the cellar is light it is well to darken the part where the plants are kept. If the roots are strong and vigor-