

How to Grow Turnips.

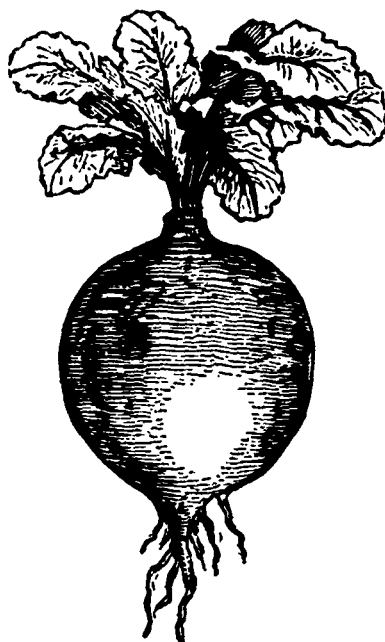
One would imagine that so much has been already written on this subject, and the crop is one so generally grown on Canadian farms, that it would be superfluous to say anything more about it. But we are constantly receiving letters asking information on the best method of the planting and cultivation of turnips and other roots, which shows that they are still gaining in favour with our farmers, notwithstanding the supposed cost of the crop, and that there are still many novices in the business of root growing. There are two kinds of roots that are called by the name of turnips, namely, the turnip proper, having a round and rather flat bulb, either white or yellow in colour, and rough, light green leaves, and the Swedish turnip, or Ruta Baga, which has a solid, yellow, and rather oval or elongated bulb, and smooth dark green leaves. The former is the kind most generally grown in Great Britain, for winter pulling or feeding to stock on the ground, and it is usually grown as a supplementary crop after beans, or on the stubbles after grain harvest, but is not so well adapted for storing as the Swedish turnip, and therefore not much grown here in comparison with Swedes.

In the newer settlements, where a clean, well-burnt surface of newly-cleared forest land can be obtained, all that is necessary to do is to sow the seed thinly broadcast over the surface, any time between the 20th June and 10th or 15th July, covering it in with a bush harrow made by tying together some brushwood at one end, and drawing the thing over the ground among the stumps by means of a yoke of oxen or a single horse. Failing that, a hand rake may be used; or should a heavy shower of rain follow the sowing of the seed, no covering becomes necessary, as the rain will wash it into the light, rich surface soil of decayed vegetable mould and ashes. After the plants are well up, and it can be seen how far they are likely to cover the ground, they should get one hoeing, just to thin them out to the proper distance apart that will allow of the bulbs having plenty of room to form good-sized roots, as weeds seldom make their appearance on newly-cleared land. This is about all the work that will be required until the turnips are to be drawn and stored, which is generally done by putting them into small ridges or pits, of about one hundred bushels each, on the field, just before the ground freezes up, with twelve or fourteen inches of earth thrown upon them, without any straw. We have grown eight hundred bushels per acre in this way on a twenty acre field, years ago, when what are now old settlements were newly-cleared lands.

In the older settlements, where the land has been deprived by successive grain crops of nearly all its vegetable humus, and the potash left from the burnt-up timber, and the soil has become infested with noxious weeds that are ready to dispute with the turnip for

the mastery, it becomes necessary to adopt more careful and expensive modes of preparation and cultivation.

For those who can afford the necessary time and labour, the plan suggested by "Veetis," in another column, as having been originated by William Cobbett, many years ago, may answer well. The part relating to the preparation of the soil by fall ploughing, and the killing out of the weeds by successive harrowings of the surface before the plants are put out, seems feasible enough, but we confess to having doubts of the utility of the transplanting method in Canada, where labour is scarce, and farmers are so fully occupied with other crops till nearly the first of June, that they may be excused if they do but partially adopt it, more in the way of the trial of a novelty than as a general method of starting this important crop.



The land in any case should be well prepared by repeated ploughings and harrowings before the drills are to be laid out. At this point there are two diverse methods in favour among farmers, namely, the ridge, and the flat drills. The former is usually followed where fresh unfermented long manure is to be applied to the crop, and consists in throwing the land into ridges twenty to twenty-six inches apart, with a plough, filling the furrows with long manure spread evenly in, at the rate of twelve to fifteen waggon loads or twenty-five cart loads per acre, then covering the manure by splitting the ridges again with the plough, leaving ridges over the manure. The drills so made are then to be somewhat compressed and flattened with a roller, and the seed sown along the centre of each, either with a turnip drill or by hand, as may be most convenient, and covered lightly not over a quarter inch in depth. About two pounds per acre will be necessary. Even more may be given where the fly is likely to take a good part.

Where short well composted manure can be had, it is best to apply it to the soil at as heavy a rate as the grower can afford; plough or cultivate it in lightly, harrow the land to a fine tilth, then sow the seed in drills on the flat surface, taking care to run them perfectly straight and evenly apart. Cover by rolling with a very light roller, which will compress the soil about the seed, and leave the surface smooth and free from clods. We have generally found the first week in July about the right time to sow, say the last thing before haymaking begins to become general.

As soon as the young plants show above the soil, dust finely slaked lime, superphosphate, or a mixture of soot and ashes, along the drills in the early morning, while the dew is on, or immediately after a rain shower. This will keep off the fly, and stimulate the plants into a rapid growth. When they are grown in flat surface drills, they can be planted nearer together, say 15 or 20 inches, and if the land is rich, or the manure well composted and incorporated with the soil, ought to produce a very heavy crop of nice medium sized bulbs, which are always to be preferred to those that are larger and coarser. Above we give a cut of what a Ruta Baga root should be like when well grown and properly cultivated. When the drills are too closely grown, it is, however, difficult to have them cultivated in any other way than by repeated hand hoeings, as in England, for an ordinary scarifier or drill hoe will not work well in such a crop. The ridge system is therefore the most generally adopted here, and has one advantage and not a small one either, in that the work of destroying the weeds can be commenced early, before hand hoeing becomes necessary to thin out the turnips.

The first hand hoeing is usually done to the flat drilled crop as soon as the turnips are large enough to be distinguished from the weeds, and the thinning out as soon as the plants are strong and well established. After the thinning out is done on either the flat or ridge system, the cultivation is directed towards destroying weeds, keeping the soil mellow, and permeable to atmospheric influence. The more the scarifier or drill cultivator can be used up to the time the cool weather and early autumn rains set in the better. After that the crop is to be left undisturbed for the bulbs to swell and ripen before hard frosts come, and the more moisture they get the larger they will grow. Let it be borne in mind that neglect or inattention on the part of the grower is absolute ruin to this crop. What is worth doing, is worth well doing, should be his axiom in this instance, as in every other undertaking he engages in.

Coal ashes and cinders make an excellent material for walks and roads, and in many respects are preferable to gravel,