

PRIMING AND TOPPING.

By the word "priming" is meant the removal of the lower or primary leaves which come out too near the ground, and often touch the surface and become torn and sandy. It is an advantage to do this work early, so that the plants may not unnecessarily lose strength by their growth. The distance from the ground this priming should be done depends somewhat on the variety, but the bottom of the stalk is usually stripped to a height of from 4 to 6 inches from the ground.

Topping is the removal of the flower stalk with one or more of the upper and smaller leaves. This is done to throw the strength of the plant which would otherwise go to the production of seed, into the more perfect development of the leaves. The plant is ready to top when the "button," as the blossom is called, has grown long enough to be taken hold of without injuring the upper leaves of the plant. As the plants do not all blossom at the same time, it is usual to let those stalks which bloom first run a little beyond the usual time of topping, so that all may be topped at the one operation. The tops when broken off should be thrown between the rows and allowed to decay. The number of leaves left on the stem at the time of topping varies from ten to sixteen or eighteen, depending on the variety grown; if topped too high the upper leaves are apt to be too small to be of much value. As the leaves of the tobacco plant are arranged on the stem in eight perpendicular ranks, the ninth leaf stands directly over the first. This fact will assist the operator in determining the number of leaves on a stalk without counting them.

SUCKERING.

After topping, "suckers" soon begin to grow, shooting out from the stalk on the upper side of each leaf at the base, those at the top starting first. As soon as they are large enough to be pulled they should be promptly removed, otherwise much of the strength of the plant will be lost and the maturing of the crop delayed. Should they start a second or third time, they should be again removed.

SAVING OF SEED.

To obtain seed for sowing the following year, a few of the earliest, most thrifty and large-leaved stalks should be left without topping. These will bloom and seed freely, and when the crop is cut these stalks should be allowed to stand. As soon as the seed pods turn to a blackish colour the seed will be nearly matured; then cut off the heads and hang them up in a dry place to cure. Later in the season strip the seed pods from the stalks, rub them in the hand and clean the seed by sifting through a fine sieve. Tobacco seed is said to retain its germinating power for several years.

INSECT ENEMIES.

Cutworms are sometimes very active in destroying the newly set plants. Where these are troublesome they may be reduced in