

# THE COLONIAL FARMER,

DEVOTED TO THE AGRICULTURAL INTERESTS OF NOVA-SCOTIA, NEW-BRUNSWICK,  
AND PRINCE EDWARD'S ISLAND.

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### POTATOES.

The ripening of Potatoes may be accelerated as much as ten days by sprouting the seed before it is planted. The expense is trifling if a house warmed by a stove. Little more than a square yard of floor need be occupied to sprout 15 bushels, and 15 bushels are sufficient to plant an acre. By the aid of this process, and early sowing, the common Blue-nose potato can be ripened at Halifax the first of September in ordinary seasons. Make slight frame support shelves by first making two ladders, each seven feet in length with rungs or rounds, one foot apart, and averaging three feet in length, those at the top being two feet ten inches, and those at the bottom three feet two inches. Connect these two ladders by three rungs of three feet on each side at right angles with the others. The frame may be set against the side of the room near the stove, and by laying pieces of boards or hoghead staves upon the rungs a range of shelves will be formed. A strip of board about three inches broad should be nailed to the ladders in front of each shelf to prevent the potatoes from falling off. Two to two and a half bushels may be put upon each shelf, imbedded in and covered with chaff, hay chaff, or fine damaged hay from the outside of a stack, and put in earth; the chaff should be slightly damped, and occasionally sprinkled. No cloth is to be put upon this frame, it being necessary that the shelves should have the light. The potatoes should be about the size of a hen's egg. This work should be done, in ordinary seasons, about the middle of March, and by the latter part of April, strong coloured sprouts about two inches long will be formed, which will bear careful handling, being much stronger than the white sprouts which are formed in earth, or in dark cellars. The potatoes should be taken in small baskets to the field, taking care not to break the sprouts. They may be planted thirty inches apart in the drills, which should have the same distance for most kinds of potatoes; but the Irish cup should have not less than three feet between both the sets and the drills, as this potato often fails in consequence of being overseeded. Land that is very rich requires less seed than that which is of ordinary quality, and land that is poor requires more; but the most common error in planting potatoes is, to use too much seed, which sometimes lessens the crop, and always lessens the size of the roots. In some seasons the potatoes on grounds exposed to the sea breeze are affected with the blight, which quickly destroys their leaves, and greatly injures the crop both in quantity and quality. Whenever this has hap-

pened, within the last thirty years, the land planted with "sprouted seed" has suffered little or nothing, because the potatoes had already acquired their full growth.

This disease in potatoes is most frequent when a warm rainy season attended with hazy nights succeeds to a drought. It always falls more heavily upon land which has been ploughed for three or more years in succession, than upon that which was lately under grass, and there are some situations where the potatoes are blighted nearly half the seasons, these are generally gravelly soils on the upper part of high hills facing the Southwest, the direction from which the summer sea breeze usually blows at Halifax. There are also some situations where this disease is never observed; they are the upper parts of hills sloping to the North, and sheltered by woods from all Southerly and Westerly winds. Loamy soils are less frequently injured by this disease, than those which are gravelly, if they are sufficiently drained, because they are less affected by droughts, for the potatoes are seldom blighted till they have first been reduced to a weak unhealthy state by drought, by being drowned with too much water, or chilled by the cold sea breeze. Like the rust upon grain the blight is rarely perceived when the nights are clear. Near the sea, if there is a choice of situations, always plant potatoes where they will be least exposed to the sea breeze. This wind is unfavorable to nearly all the crops we cultivate except cabbage, turnips, and beets, and as all violent winds are injurious to cultivated crops, clumps of wood ought to be permitted to grow on elevated situations so frequently as to break their force in a considerable degree. In this province, or in Newfoundland, if one third of a district were covered with wood in such situations that it would shelter the cultivation from two winds that are most adverse to vegetation, the remaining two-thirds would produce more than the whole would if laid entirely open. A five acre field surrounded by an old forest will produce many kinds of vegetables ten days earlier than the open land near it.

We see wherever the forest adjoins the open sea that there is no large timber near the shore even where the soil is good enough to produce it. Instead of this, the shore will be found fringed with a very close thicket of white spruce or fir, the trees directly on the shore not more than three feet high, and the branches so crowded that a man may walk upon their tops—farther from the shore the trees grow taller, but are still small and very thick set. At the distance of a quarter of a mile back, a sprinkling of short yellow birches a foot or more in thickness may be found, always in the midst of a thicket of firs, and at the distance of a mile and a half back some large spruce and pine and perhaps a little beech may be found. The hemlock rarely finds sufficient shelter near to the sea than three miles. Notwithstanding that nature shows so distinctly that even our large forest trees cannot live without shelter from winds, the thoughtless coasters often clear a field upon the shore, cutting down every bush to the very edge of the bank, and then complains that his potatoes have the tops broken down by high winds. Wherever the shore is so much exposed that any stones or gravel are found to be rolled up above high water mark by the surf, an edging of wood should be left always undisturbed along the bank, to protect the crops from wind, and to serve a shelter for sheep, who always get a great part of their living in winter from the sea beach, when they can come at it.