

THE

CANADIAN AGRICULTURIST.

VOL. I.

TORONTO, APRIL 2, 1849.

No. 4.

THE CULTIVATION OF FORAGE CROPS.

In a country like Canada, where the winters are not only long, but oftentimes excessively severe, it is a matter of the first importance that the farmer should amply provide himself with the best kinds of provender for sustaining his cattle in a comfortable and thriving condition through that rigorous season. But in order to do this, it is necessary that like the bee, he should make timely provision. The neglect of a few weeks, or even days, in spring, involves the loss of a whole year. And this is particularly the case in our climate; spring being but of short duration, the period for sowing is necessarily restricted within very narrow limits. Hence the necessity of making timely preparation to facilitate the important operations of that season, which to the husbandman is pregnant with interest and hope. In the present paper we propose throwing together a few hints and observations on the culture of the principal forage crops, reserving for future occasions more minute and systematic descriptions of each particular kind.

1. **THE TURNIP.**—Foremost among root crops, stands the *Swedish turnip*, a vegetable which no farmer ought to be without. Although this plant is subject to severe casualties, arising from the depredation of insects and the influence of the seasons, yet the observance of the following simple rules will be generally found successful.

In preparing the soil for turnips and root crops generally, it is highly desirable to give a deep clean ploughing in the fall, and to make a sufficient number of furrows in the proper directions to take off readily the water arising from the melting of the snow and heavy rains of spring. When farm yard dung is intended as a dressing for these kinds of crops, it is generally preferable to plough it in at this time, particularly if it is what is called long or rough,—that is, in an undecomposed state. The manure thus becomes more readily mixed with the soil, and by the repeated ploughing and harrowing in the spring it is brought into a condition adapted to the wants of the young plant, an object, particularly in a dry season, of very great importance. In more

advanced countries than ours, artificial manures are commonly applied to turnips, such as guano, rape, bone dust, &c. Such dressings are invariably applied in spring, generally in drills with the seed, but not in actual contact with it. As to the precise time and *manner* of sowing, something must always be left to the character of the season, the state of the land; and we may add, in respect to the latter condition, what is often lost sight of by mere theoretical writers, the means and other varying circumstances of the farmer. As we cannot now enter upon particulars, let it suffice to say, that plants cultivated for their roots should be sown as soon as the soil can be properly prepared, that is a deep and fine tilth obtained, and the growing season about fairly commencing. In most northern climates that is a period admitting of considerable variation.—There is danger in being too early in sowing the *Swedish turnip*, since the leaves are liable in particular states of the atmosphere, to become mildewed, and the bulb consequently suffers both in size and nutritive quality. Indeed, the climate of this country is frequently too dry and parching for turnips of any variety, and consequently such soils should be selected for their culture as possess a porous, moist subsoil, containing calcareous and organic matter.

Sowing plenty of good seed in drills from 20 to 24 inches apart, is upon the whole the best mode, as it allows the use of the horse-hoe in keeping the ground free from weeds, and by occasionally stirring the soil the power of capillary attraction is increased, fertilizing gaseous matters are evolved, and as a consequence the growth of the plant is more rapidly advanced. There have been several remedies proposed against the destructive effects of the turnip fly, none of which can in all seasons be depended upon. Thick sowing and the application of quick lime to the plants as soon as the smooth leaves begin to appear, will generally prove successful. Care should be exercised in setting out the turnips in the row about nine or ten inches asunder, when the plants have attained a moderate size, leaving such only to stand as are strong and healthy.

2. **MANGEL-WURZEL.**—This plant ranks next to