

Managing a Greenhouse for Profits

ONE of the pioneer market gardeners of Nova Scotia is Mr. H. Loomer, of Falmouth, Hants Co. Eighteen years ago Mr. Loomer made a start in gardening by purchasing thirty-six acres, most of which at the time was rough land. His total initial capital was just seven hundred dollars.

For upwards of twelve years no extensive greenhouse work was attempted; cold frames and hotbeds only were used to get a longer growing season. No attempt was made at first to grow anything out of the ordinary line of market vegetables. The nearby town of Windsor was the nearest market, and a large part of the truck Mr. Loomer sold by going from house to house with his team. But gradually the market was enlarged, until to-day shipments are made to most large towns of the province.

Over five years ago Mr. Loomer's trade had reached considerable proportions, although he had as yet made no attempt to grow vegetables out of season on a large scale. By early starting and careful methods he got his produce on the market before the general crops came on and thus obtained the top price. But Mr. Loomer believed in the possibilities of growing vegetables under glass and backed up his belief by erecting a one hundred and fifty by thirty foot greenhouse. Year by year the plant has been increased, until now there is about fifty thousand feet of glass. When visited by an editor of *The Canadian Horticulturist* early in July, one hundred dollars' worth of products were being shipped out every day; the annual output is over ten thousand dollars.

During July the chief greenhouse crops are cucumbers and tomatoes. From a half-acre of glass Mr. Loomer turns off an average of one thousand cucumbers a day for a period of two months. Greenhouse lettuce, radish, and spinach are over by that time. By the first of August, when the outdoor stuff is coming on, the greenhouse crop is about done. The vines are cleaned out and manure is spread four to five inches deep. This manure is kept watered down till September when a team is taken into the greenhouses and the manure is plowed under. This is the only dressing of manure that the ground receives during the year. Successive crops receive applications of commercial fertilizers.

Towards the middle of September the first sowings of lettuce, radish and spinach are made. Lettuce is sown thick in one of the houses and then transplanted to some of the others. The first cut is made in November and continued sowings give a supply through the winter.

Sowings of cucumber are made from January first to the end of February. Previous sowings of lettuce are made with a vacant row every seven feet, and this row is sown to cucumbers. At other times the cucumbers are placed seven feet apart, with two rows of beets between and a row of radish or lettuce between each row of beets. Cucumbers are sown fifteen inches apart in the rows. The vines are trained on upright trellises to a height of six or seven feet and then overhead on setting. The laterals are pruned at the second bud, leaving two fruits to each branch. A hive of bees is kept in each house to ensure the setting of the fruit.

Mr. Loomer's favorite variety is a cross that he has himself made between two varieties—Rawson's Hothouse and Granite State. From this cross he has made continual selection and has a splendid cucumber of medium length.

The spring tomato crop is sown in December and January. Four or five transplantings are made before bearing. The final settings are in rows two and one-half feet apart, with sixteen to eighteen inches between plants. The vines are trained upright on a string and pruned to single stem leaders. The method of pruning for fruit is practically the same as the Potter system, as described in the *July Horticulturist*. Bees fly in the tomato houses during the winter and a satisfactory set of fruit is obtained. The bees are fed sugar syrups at that time.

During the winter and early spring, celery, lettuce, beets, cabbages, tomatoes, cucumbers and squash are all started in the greenhouse for early planting out of doors. These come on the market early and bring the top price. Irrig-

ation has been found necessary to bring transplanted lettuce along nicely. The Skinner system of irrigation is used. The best possible use is made of the land; between the rows of early vegetables late celery is sown.

About the first of June celery is sown out of doors, where it remains till October. It is then brought into the greenhouse and marketed at Christmas time; it gets a good growth before much heat is needed in the houses.

In one small house tomato seed is sown about June 15 and cucumber seed at August 15. These are turned off for the fall trade. The tomatoes are sown earlier because the fruit does not set well during the dark days of late fall. For spring planting Mr. Loomer uses the Bonny Bess variety but prefers the Stone for fall planting. The former does not color well in the greenhouse during winter. Grand Rapids is his favorite variety of lettuce for the greenhouse, as it is about the only one that will stand as much heat as the cucumbers. It must be well supplied with water.

There is something of the supernatural about Mr. Loomer's water supply. He spent several thousand dollars boring artesian wells in order to locate a sufficient flow of water, but without success. A lady visiting at his home not long ago remarked that she could locate water with a forked apple branch. Mr. Loomer was quite willing to let her try, so they went out to see if water could be found. After a while his friend indicated where she thought there might be water. Men were set to work, and at a depth of ten feet a supply of water was found that a gasoline engine, pumping forty gallons a minute, cannot drain in a day.



Interior of one of the Greenhouses of Mr. H. Loomer, Falmouth, N. S.
(See accompanying article.)