

Tomatoes and Cucumbers for Early Markets

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ON growing early cucumbers and tomatoes for market two special local conditions are requisite for the most profitable production of the crop. The first is a high, warm, sandy soil; the second is nearness to a large body of water to prevent late spring frosts. Within the last few years this phase of vegetable growing has become an extensive industry in this locality. Early tomatoes receive the most attention.

The plants are grown in greenhouses. I have four houses 10 feet wide and 50 feet long, and one house 52 feet wide and 80 feet long. They are cheaply made and cheaply heated, but specially adapted to the growing and hardening of early vegetable plants. The construction and heating of these houses may be a subject for a future article.

The seeds are planted about March 1 to 15, in trays or flats one foot wide, two feet long and four inches deep. In these is put about two and a half inches of good garden loam which is thoroughly saturated with water, and covered with about an inch of soil. This makes an ideal bed on which to sow the seeds. Make small drills across the tray one quarter inch deep and one and a half inches apart, and in them sow the seeds thinly. By having the soil wet in the bottom of the tray, enough moisture is usually supplied to last until the plants come up. They should be watched carefully at this period, and not allowed to get too dry, nor should they have too much water as they are very easily destroyed from the time they begin to germinate until they come through the ground.

When the seedlings have developed two rough leaves, transplant them two inches apart each way. When they begin to crowd each other, transplant about three inches apart, and when they again crowd, give them their final shift into individual boxes five or six inches square, or to positions five or six inches apart each way in trays or beds. The soil in which these plants are grown should not be too rich in nitrogen, but should contain a good percentage of phosphoric acid and potash. In growing the plants great care must be taken in watering. Early in the season it should be done in the morning. Saturate the soil to the bottom and do not water again until the soil is dry on top. Give ventilation whenever possible to secure a strong, stocky growth. The house should be kept at a temperature of about 60 degrees at night until the plants come up. After that about 50 degrees at night and 75

or 80 degrees during the day is sufficient. As soon as the weather will permit many of the plants are put in cold frames and covered at night with cotton.

Planting in the field is usually commenced about May 15 to 20. A warm sandy soil, rich enough to produce a good crop of corn, is selected, and the plants set four feet apart in rows five feet apart. It pays to put a large handful of good fertilizer around each plant, and to work it well into the soil. A fertilizer containing about four per cent. nitrogen, eight per cent. phosphoric acid, and seven per cent. potash is satisfactory. The plants are cultivated frequently until they are so large that they prevent it. As the plants grow larger the cultivation should be more shallow.

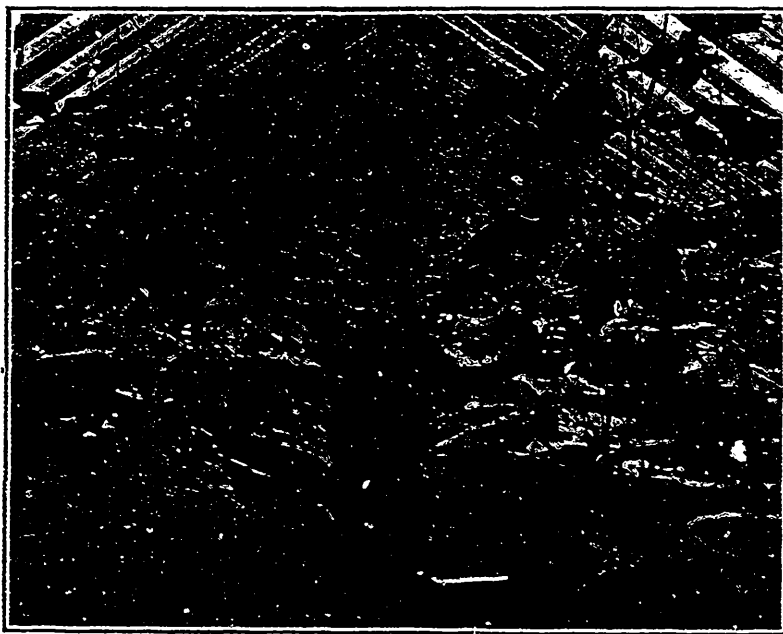
I have tested many varieties and find Earliana much the best early sort for this locality. I put out 18,000 plants of this variety last season, and began to ship the fruit July 6. The fruit is sent by express to cities, towns and villages from Quebec to Winnipeg. The greatest drawback we have is excessive express rates. About one-quarter to one-third of the proceeds of the crop is taken by the express companies for carrying it to market.

Cucumbers are started in trays in

the same way as the tomatoes except that the seeds are planted farther apart—not less than one and a half by two inches. The trays should be placed in the warmest part of the greenhouse. Cucumbers require a soil rich in humus or decayed vegetable matter.

When the first rough leaf is about the size of a dime, the seedlings should be transplanted and set three or four inches apart in other flats. When they have made four or five rough leaves they can be set in boxes seven inches square, one plant in a box. If trained to stakes the plants can be left in these boxes until part of the tomato plants are set out. Then they are put where they are to remain for cropping. Two rows are put in the 10 foot houses and 10 rows in the large house as shown in the illustration. The plants are set three feet apart and trained to a V shaped trellis six feet high, made of binder twine. All the vines are kept on the trellis and none are allowed on the ground.

In the large house there are no benches. The plants are set in the ground soil, which is made rich with manure, finely ground or dissolved bone, and wood ashes. Large quantities of water are required to grow cucumbers. We use a windmill and a gasoline en-



Cucumbers as grown in Mr. Hilborn's Greenhouse.