

## TOMATO CULTURE.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## PICKING AND MARKETING TOMATOES.

The gathering of the fruit is a matter of no small importance. The best of fruit is easily damaged by careless hands, handling them in a careless manner. In picking and cleaning, the less the fruit is handled the better. If the tomatoes are to be sold wholesale at a canning factory, the cheapest way is to hire them picked by the bushel. A little cracking or bruising makes but little difference when they are to be used at once. By hiring them picked by the bushel, and drawing them directly to the factory without sorting or cleaning, they can be sold considerably cheaper than when they are prepared for the general market. For market and shipping purposes, my experience is that it is most satisfactory to hire the picking done by the day or week, for the simple reason that, if let to pick by the bushel, it is almost impossible to get them picked with care. Boys from 14 to 18 years of age are good helps, but to have the work done right it is best to hire a good man and place two boys under his control, giving the boys to understand that they are to work under his direction, and giving the man to understand that he will be expected to see that the boys under his guidance are faithful and do their work properly. The trio should take three rows, with the man on the centre row. An active boy should be able to pick about as fast as a man; but if they fall behind the man should help them up, and so keep them under his eye and control all the time. The owner, however, should see that the boys are not imposed upon, or made to wheel or carry burdens too heavy for their strength.

The tomatoes should be picked and laid carefully into the picking boxes. They should never be thrown or tossed carelessly. They should then be wheeled immediately into the market shed, then be wiped clean and laid into the market boxes, or, if to be shipped, into the shipping boxes. Lay them in with the stem end down; laid in thus they carry better, and look better than if pitched in any way. Any that are cracked, bruised, or very rough, should be sorted out and sold as culls at half price, for making catsup. If they cannot be sold, feed them to pigs; they will fatten pigs much faster than potatoes. They are also valuable for feeding milch cows. When putting them up for market, have a pair of scales at hand; take the weight of the empty box, then add 28 pounds for the tomatoes and you will have half a bushel.