

Efficient Farming

Poultry

SEED TESTING AND SEED SOWING.

Seed testing—it is a good plan to test seeds before sowing for a crop. This can be done by counting out an even number of seeds, not less than 20 or 25 of each kind, and sowing them in sand or sandy soil in a temperature of about 60 to 65 degrees. If a soil infestation of damp cotton or cattail plants may be spread out on a white cylinder plate and the seed placed singly and separately on the flannel or cotton. Over this spread another piece of damp cotton or flannel and then place an inverted funnel plate over all. The soil of initial used should be kept damp enough to aid germination. Examining the seeds and keep close watch as to date and percentage of germination. In selecting seed for testing, select a fair average of large and of small and imperfect seeds as well so that a test can be made.

Soil.—The soil used to sow seeds should be of a sandy nature, not too coarse in texture, or too rich in fertilizers. Old-fashioned soil or good common garden soil with a good proportion of sand mixed with it, about one-third sand to five or six parts of moderately rich loamy soil is suitable. This soil should be dry, not wet; it should not be dusty dry.

Preparing Boxes.—Shallow, well-drained boxes, flower pots, or saucers should be used to sow seeds for growing early plants indoors. Boxes (that is), three or four, and one-half inches in depth, with earthenware sides about six inches apart, bound along the bottom for drainage purposes, ideal for sowing seeds in to transplant again, much better than glass boxes. The boxes may be of any reasonable length or width, 10 x 12 inches, for small flats, and 12 x 24 inches for larger flats, are useful sizes to use. Shallow half-pots are good for sowing seeds for transplanting later.

First place some broken pieces of flint pot, coarse gravel, or similar material in the bottom of the box, for drainage. Then put about one inch in depth of coarse, fibrous texture on top of the drainage, in the pot or box. The balance of the soil, loam, should be put in both of the boxes, and should be of uniform texture, not too fine. Although one inch in depth of loam is good, it should be sifted on top of this to a depth of two inches. The plants will grow more easily and quickly if sown in the top of the soil. The surface of the soil should be level and from one-quarter to one-half inch below the top of the box, when dried, so as to allow water to drain off.

Sowing Seed.—For Transplant Purposes.—There are two methods of sowing seed or drills or broadcast on the surface of the soil, the broadcast (scattering) method being the best for fine seeds. Use a hand播器 (hand piece of lath or box) outside of the box, or for large flats, with the distance between the rows of seeds to mark where the drills are to go, and be sure to space the seeds apart.

About one-quarter-inch distance for the row, or drills is a good right distance for most seeds. A driller is also very useful to plant straight drill, and an even drill for seeds. This can be made from a piece of hard wood the width and length of a hand and half an inch longer than width of the box or box set. It should be bevelled on one or both edges to about one-quarter inch in thickness. It should not be pressed straight down into the soil when being used, but moved backward and forward, and pressed lightly and evenly so as to make a drill of uniform and proper distance for the different kinds of seed. A piece of heavy flat board the size of inside of the box, so that the roots and about half the length of the stem is inserted in the soil. The roots should hang perpendicular to the soil, the tips of the roots on no account to be pointing upward, and all the roots should be at least one-quarter of an inch or more below the surface. Press the plants firmly around each plant so as to set it in position firmly. Water the plants carefully at once and draw from sun for a few days. Water the plants rather sparingly after the first watering, for a week or so until growth starts, when more liberal waterings may be given. Cultivate soil surface, stir the soil around the plants about once a week. This should be done when the surface soil is fairly dry. Surface stirring the soil will help down weeds, promote growth, and help to conserve the moisture.

Covering the Seed.—This should be filled in lightly, dry, with a label on top with the finger, and seed broadcast should be covered with dry, finely sifted soil. This should not be sifted on the seeds, but with the sand in the same way as recommended for sowing the seeds. Soil is sifted on, it results in an even application, and necessary scraping or leveling off, an operation that often causes the seed to be disturbed or perhaps scraped away altogether. The surface of the soil should be quite level, and then pressed down slightly after the seed is covered.

Depth to Sow Seeds.—About varies the diameter or thickness of the seed, slightly deeper for very large seeds.

Watering.—The seed should be thoroughly but carefully watered so as not to cover the seed from the soil. A watering can having a fine strainer may be used or a piece of burlap (sacking) the exact size of inside of the box, may be closely over the surface of the soil water can without a strainer, pitcher or a jug may be used for applying the water if burlap is used only moderate care is in the operation. Be sure and know the water soak well into the soil before rinsing the surface. The water may be used to wash the soil before rinsing the surface.

Taking the "real" interest in

A light sprinkle of fine, dry sand over the surface after the first watering will help to prevent "mycelium" or "damping off" as it is termed. This damping off is a fungous disease induced mainly by a too close, humid, warm atmosphere, insufficient ventilation, or by imperfect drainage or careless watering. Giving the plants more air and a lower temperature, and a lower temperature will help to prevent "damping off." A temperature of from 60 to 65 degrees F. is suitable for hens' eggs in the top and bottom tiers of nests, leaving the intervening room unused.

The latter point is of special significance when one is keeping fowls of the general purpose type. In one case which came to the writer's attention, a flock of Plymouth Rock was found to have practically all eggs in the top and bottom tiers of nests, leaving the intervening room unused.

Observation brought out the fact that the bottom tier was the only one that could be reached easily from the floor. The top tier was just because the hens could fly to it easily from the front of the droppings board. All nests were open, but no hen was placed with an alighting board for the convenience of the hens. Hence they could not make use of the middle rows.

Lephorns seem to choose high nests in preference to low ones when provision is made for them. A slight easiness in front of any nest. A five-week-old chick would fly to it easily from the front of the droppings board. All nests were open, but no hen was placed with an alighting board for the convenience of the hens. Hence they could not make use of the middle rows.

Shading—Seeds should be shaded from just sun until germination starts, when they should gradually be given more sunlight. Avoid shading plants deeply as it induces a weak spindly growth.

Transplanting—Seedlings should be transplanted when from four to six leaves have started as soon as the plants can be handled before they are crowded or too tall and slender. Soil of a coarser texture and slightly richer in fertilizers may be used for transplanting seedlings in. One part sand to eight or nine parts of finely rich loamy soil will suit most seedlings.

Soil too rich in fertilizers causes abnormal rank growth and of otherwise undesirable. Stout, sturdy growth is better than rank abnormal growth for transplanting purposes. It is better to transplant each plant singly into small-sized clay pots or in soil banks about two and one-half inches deep and two and one-half inches diameter.

The plants will form balls of roots in the soil that can be easily transferred later on to a larger sized pots, or planted out in the ground as required, without disturbing the root system very much, thus preventing any check, but at least, in plants when transplanting, this is avoided.

"Oh, how lovely," she exclaimed, "I'm afraid my Teddy isn't very beautiful. He's a dear boy, but he never thinks to say me anything."

"Perhaps it's your fault," Ray's mother offered. "We always taught you how to speak nicely. You never said a word to me this morning."

"Well, how do you like him?" Ray's mother asked. "He's a sweet, little fellow, I think."

"I'm afraid he's not very good-looking," Ray's mother said. "He's a bit of a scamp, but he's a good boy."

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