

Seed Potatoes

A man who grows good potatoes when potatoes are needed, is a public benefactor.

According to present production and consumption in Ontario, from twenty-five to thirty people or from five to six families are supplied with potatoes for one year from each average acre of land which the farmer plants with this crop. An increase of fifty per cent in yield would mean an increase in the amount of potatoes produced on each average acre of land sufficient to supply about one dozen people for twelve months. In most years Ontario imports potatoes from the Maritime Provinces and, at the present time a part of our supply is coming from the Provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. Ontario is well adapted to the production of potatoes of excellent quality and should supply at least her own demands.

The potato crop of Ontario could be decidedly and economically improved by a more general use of pure well bred seed of a few of the best varieties, by the adoption of better method of culture, and by a more complete control of insects and diseases. It should be the aim of every grower to produce large yields of uniform potatoes free from disease and of high table quality. Varieties of potatoes grown under uniform conditions at the Ontario Agricultural College varied in yield per acre from 13 to 366 bushels, in amount, of rot from less than one to over seventy per cent, and in table quality from 36 to 83 out of a maximum of 100 points. Some kinds are found to be very susceptible to rot and others to be almost immune. The table quality of potatoes varies far more than many people realize when mealiness, flavor and appearance of different varieties are taken into consideration and are carefully determined.

In each of four years an experiment has been conducted at the Agricultural College in testing under similar conditions potatoes obtained from different sources. For instance, eighteen lots of Empire State potatoes were secured from eight different sources, five in the Province of New Brunswick and three in Ontario. Seed potatoes grown about one hundred and forty miles north of Guelph in Muskoka District, near the Muskoka Lakes, have given a higher yield per acre than those obtained from any other source in each of the four years of this experiment. Seed potatoes grown in a cool moist climate which prevents maturity are often superior to those which have ripened in a hot, dry climate. Immature seed potatoes are usually inferior for table use but furnish excellent seed. Potatoes grown in Ontario in a comparatively cold wet season like that of 1915 are likely to be of good quality for planting, providing they are free from disease. Tubers showing discoloration or signs of rot on the outer surface or when cut should not be used for planting.

There are far too many varieties of potatoes grown on the farms of Ontario. This is one of the greatest weaknesses in the potato industry of the Province. It is a defect that should be remedied as soon as possible. If Ontario would confine herself to a few of the best varieties of potatoes the annual crop would be increased in yield, in quality, and in commercial value.

There are over one thousand named varieties of potatoes in North America, and fully four hundred have been grown under experiment at the Ontario Agricultural College. Many of these are quite inferior, even though they have been extravagantly advertised; some are old varieties under new names, and comparatively few are worthy of general cultivation by the farmers of Ontario. If these few were grown to the exclusion of fully

eighty per cent of the kinds now under cultivation better results would be obtained, whether the potatoes were produced for home use or for commercial purposes.

Some of the varieties of potatoes which have been prominent in the experiments at the Ontario Agricultural College, and in the co-operative experiments throughout Ontario are the Empire State, the Davies Warrior, the Rural New Yorker No. 2, the Green Mountain and the Carman No. 1 of the late, and the extra early Eureka, the Early Ohio, and the Stray Beauty or Bliss Triumph of the early varieties. In appearance there is a similarity between the Extra Early Eureka and the Delaware varieties and also between the Extra Early Eureka and the Irish Cobbler varieties. In the experiments at Guelph, however, the Green Mountain and the Extra Early Eureka gave the best results in yield per acre, in table quality, and in freedom from rot. The three varieties of potatoes which have made particularly good records in the co-operative experiments throughout Ontario in productivity, table quality, and popularity with the experimenters are the Davies' Warrior, and the Empire State of the late, and the Extra Early Eureka of the early varieties.

In the average results of all varieties grown in the years '05, '06, '10 and '15, in which there was more or less rot in the potato crops at the College, the Davies' Warrior, the Extra Early Eureka and the stray Beauty produced the smallest, and the Early Rose, the Beauty of Hebron and the Early Ohio the largest percentages of rotten potatoes of all the varieties grown under uniform conditions.

It has been found to be good practice to use smooth, well shaped sound tubers of good size and of the best varieties. These can be cut by hand into sets from one to two ounces in weight, each set containing two, three, or even better four eyes.

It is an advantage to throw the freshly cut potato sets into finely ground land plaster and to plant them immediately after being cut. Good results have been obtained by dropping the pieces separately from twelve to fifteen inches apart in the rows and by having the rows twenty-eight or thirty inches apart. The potato sets can be planted from three to five inches deep, depending upon the character and condition of the soil. Level cultivation frequently gives the best results on a light soil, and ridged cultivation on a soil of a heavier nature.

It is often an advantage to expose whole seed potatoes in a subdued light in a warm room about three weeks before planting. Especially is this true if the potatoes are to be grown for early use. The production of short, thick, green sprouts before planting helps to hasten the growth and to increase the yield.

C. A. Zavitz.

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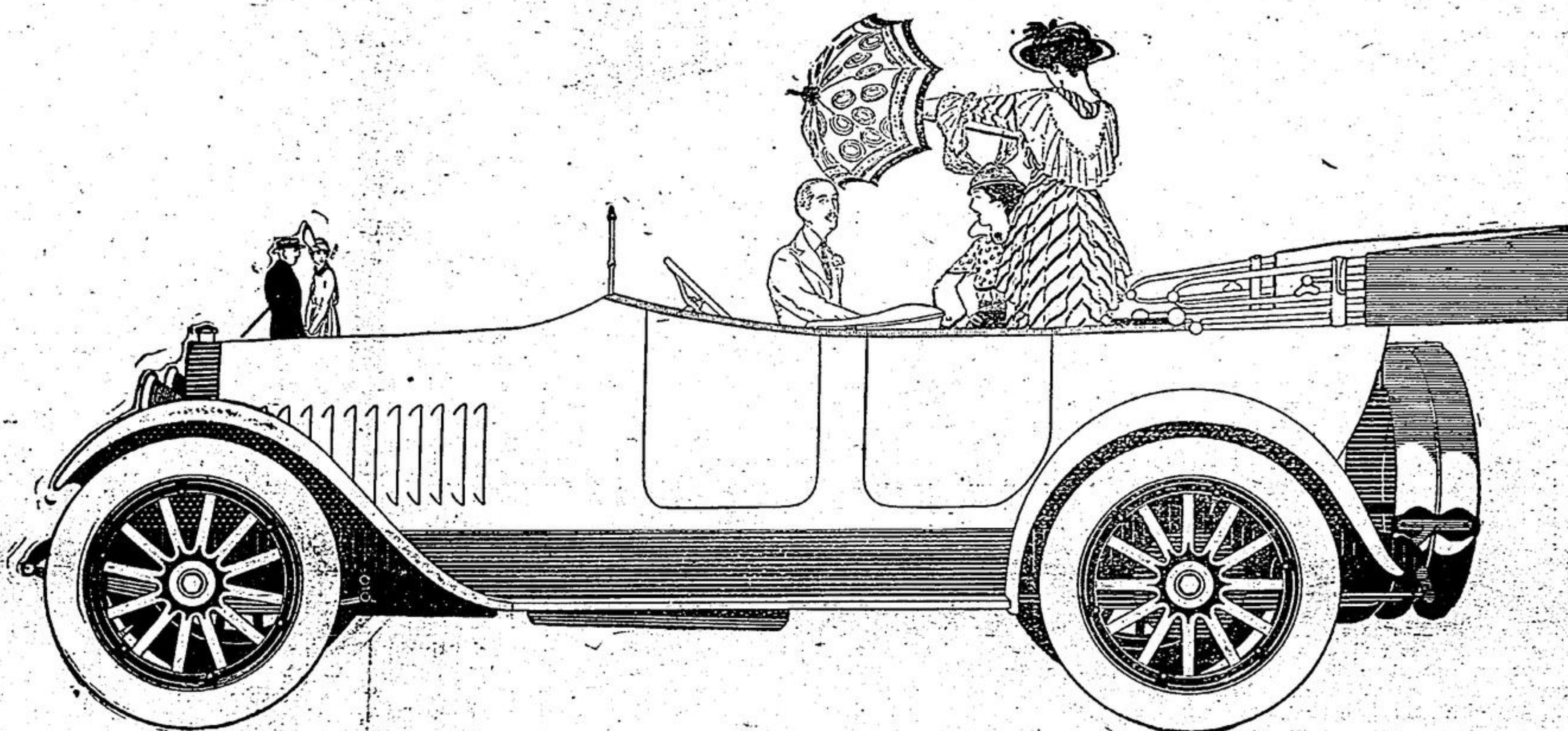
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