

Potato Culture

About forty experiments with potatoes have been conducted in field plots at the Ontario Agricultural College. Each of these experiments has extended over a period varying from five to twenty-six years. As supplementary to the work at the College, an average of about 1,600 farmers have conducted annually co-operative tests with potatoes on their own farms.

Potatoes can be grown successfully on almost any fertile and friable soil which is either naturally or artificially underdrained. Good soils, whether loams, or friable clay loams, might be mentioned as particularly well suited for the potato crop. Rich, sandy loams are specially favorable for the production of potatoes for early use. On light sands, heavy clays and black muck soils the growing of potatoes is usually more difficult although good results are sometimes obtained from even these soils. The most of the soils of Ontario are very well suited for potato production, providing they are properly underdrained either naturally or artificially. Some sections are particularly well adapted to potato growing on a large commercial basis.

Potatoes do exceptionally well after sod, and especially if it is clover. When potatoes are planted after sod it is a frequent practice to plow the land in the latter part of May to a depth of about four inches. The potato sets are dropped in every third furrow. The land is harrowed a few times before the potato plants reach the surface. The young growth of the grass and the roots of the plants keep the soil in a friable condition, and if the soil is properly handled excellent results are sometimes obtained from this method.

Another plan is to plow the land deeply in the early part of the Autumn and, at a later date to cultivate the soil and give it a dressing of manure after which it can be put into ridges thirty inches wide with a double mould-board plow. This protects the manure and the mellow soil in the ridges and enables the air and the frost to come into direct contact with the subsoil in the furrows. It is the practice of some potato growers to place the manure on the sod in the summer, autumn, winter or spring and to plow the sod with its top dressing of manure before planting time. If potatoes follow corn or roots the fresh manure is often used to advantage with the latter instead of the former. When potatoes come after a grain crop the stubble land is frequently worked on the surface as soon as possible after harvest in order to conserve the soil moisture and to induce the weed seeds to germinate. With this preparation the land is in excellent condition to be plowed to a good depth in the autumn even though the weather is comparatively dry. If manure is applied to the land in the spring for the potato crop it should be well rotted and mixed throughout the soil instead of being placed with seed potatoes in the rows, as the manure has a tendency of increasing the scab. The cultivation of the soil for potatoes should be deep and thorough. There are but few crops which respond more readily than potatoes to the careful preparation of the seed bed.

Soon after planting, the field should be lightly harrowed to smooth the surface, to check the germinating weed seeds, and to conserve the soil moisture. This process can be repeated just as the young plants are appearing through the ground. As soon as the plants are up the soil between the rows should be cultivated deeply. Other cultivations should follow every week or ten days according to weather conditions, should become more shallow as the season advances, and should be continued until the

tops come together in the rows. Thorough cultivation mellow the soil, conserves the moisture, kills the weeds, and greatly assists in the production of large yields of well formed tubers.

Numerous experiments have been conducted with fertilizers and manures with potatoes at the College and throughout Ontario. It has been found that on the average economical returns have been produced by an application of 320, 640 or 960 pounds of commercial fertilizer per acre. The fertilizers used contained nitrogen, phosphoric acid and potash in about the proportions of 3, 7 and 4 respectively. The highest average yield of potatoes per acre was made from twenty tons of farmyard manure, the second highest from ten tons of

manure and 320 pounds of fertilizer and the third highest from 960 pounds of fertilizer per acre. According to the results of the definite experiments which are conducted in the Department of Field Husbandry at our College, we have found that spraying the crop with Bordeaux Mixture, and with Paris Green or Lead Arsenate, or both, guards against blight, protects against insects, stimulates and prolongs growth, and increases both the yield per acre and the percentage of marketable potatoes.

It is an excellent practice to go through the potato field in the summer and to dig up and destroy all weak and unhealthy plants. This also gives an opportunity for removing plants which are not true to the variety

and for marking with stakes a few of the hills having vigorous plants with the best foliage and the least amount of blight and other diseases. These specially can be dug later and the potatoes from the best plants will furnish seed of superior quality. In growing potatoes in Ontario farmers may work independently of each other, or they may cooperate with some organization which is working in a definite and systematic way. Some of the organizing agencies in operation are the Experimental Union the Canadian Seed Growers' Association, the Acre Profit Contests, the Field Crop Competitions, and the Potato Growers' Co-operative Associations. The work of these agencies will likely be increased in the near future.



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up-to-date and full of interest to the lover of out-of-door sports, whose equipment includes rod, gun, dog or trap.

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