



## What Farmers Want to Know

By W. F. Massey

### Salt Not a Fertilizer

"DOES salt contain any potash?" Not a bit of it. Salt is chloride of soda, and soda will not take the place of potash, though there are some who think it will. In a soil abounding in insoluble potash it might possibly help to release it. But as you refer to the Irish potato crop, I would say that I think salt will do more harm than good on that crop, and that an equal mixture of cotton-seed meal and acid phosphate is about as good as we can do.

### Seed Oats

"I AM sending two samples of oats. No. 1 is known in Illinois as Red Spring oats, and No. 2 as White Spring oats. Please examine and say which is best for farmers to use here."

As a rule spring oats do not amount to much. The white sample is the heavier oat. But I have long since found that in the South our Southern oats are far better for sowing in the South than any Northern spring oats. I would sow either the Virginia Gray Turf oats or the Apple, an improvement on the Texas Red.

### Sundry Queries

"WHAT is the best and most tender and stringless bunch bean? What is the name of a field corn that will produce more than any other? What is the best summer tomato that will not rot?"

I know of no better snap bean than Burpee's Green Pod Stringless. The Cocke's Prolific, Marlboro Prolific and Mosby Prolific are all heavy yielding corns. There is no tomato grown that will not rot under some conditions, I grow Success, Red Rock and Mississippi Girl for the main summer crop, and Langdon Earliana and Bonny Best for the earliest.

### Potatoes for Seed

"WE HAVE about 15 bushels of Irish potatoes grown last spring, which I thought of planting, but am told they will not bear. Can you tell me if it will pay to plant them? They seem sound and sprouting."

If you have succeeded in carrying the crop of last spring through in a plump and unshriveled condition, I can see no reason why they should not do well. But if the potatoes are shriveled they will grow weakly and I would not use them. The best seed potatoes are those grown late in the fall from cold storage seed, and which are perfectly plump and un-sprouted. Last spring I planted home-grown seed from this late fall crop grown on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and made the finest crop of Cobblers I have ever grown. You can get seed of this character in Louisville, Ky., for they are largely grown for seed around there, and the finest crops I have seen in the great Norfolk truck section were from Kentucky seed. Seed potatoes from Maine are so apt to bring disease that there is a tendency to avoid them.

### Rot in Sweet Potatoes

"WE ARE troubled very much with a rot in sweet potatoes, called dry rot, which seems to be carried over from year to year in our soils. The general practice of the farmers here is to use the same seed bed year after year. I would like to know if an application of sulphur mixed with the soil in the seed bed would destroy the disease in the bed and not interfere with the sprouting. Or could we use some strong dip to destroy the germs on the potatoes?"

So long as you use the same seed bed you will probably have the disease, and so long as you bed any potatoes showing the dark spots of the black rot you will have the disease in the crop and some black shank plants in the bed probably. Sulphur might have a slight effect in checking it, but sprinkling the potatoes with formaldehyde, 1 pint to 25 gallons of water, would have a better effect. But the best thing will be to grow healthy seed for bedding, by growing a late crop from healthy vine cuttings and keeping these over for bedding. Then never bed in the same place twice, and always bed in clean sand and not in rich soil. You will get short and well rooted plants in sand, and when healthy potatoes are bedded you will get rid of the rot if you do not plant the same land in potatoes more than one year at a time.

### Plaster for Clover

FROM Virginia: "I have some red clover sown last August, which I wish to top-dress with something. How would plaster do which I see advertised near Roanoke? It is what is called lime marl. Is it any good to build up land?"

The lime marl is not plaster. It is

## MARCH JOBS FOR BUSY FARMERS

- Apply nitrate of soda to small grain when leaf blades are dry.
- Break land for summer crops. Do not plow land too wet.
- Plant the following vegetable seed in the open garden—lettuce, spinach, beets, onion seeds and sets, salsify, turnips, radishes. Transplant cabbage from cold frames to open ground. The latter part of the month plant garden corn, snap beans, kale, parsnips.
- If troubled with root knot or wilt in tomato or cabbage, set plants where they have not been grown before.
- Plant corn in March to escape losses from bill bug and bud worm.
- Spray peach trees with arsenate of lead when buds have swelled to control fruit worms.
- Telegraph or write state veterinarian if your hogs have cholera.
- Keep little chickens away from laying hens.

—Clemson College Bulletin.

calcium carbonate, and plaster is the sulphate of lime. On land like yours, which abounds in insoluble potash, I have found that plaster does have some effect on clover in the release of potash. The lime marl will also have some such effect. In the improvement of the land the lime marl, which is simply the carbonate of lime deposited from the action of running water on limestone rock, can be used profitably in curing the acidity of the soil if it can be had at a reasonable price. But it will take twice as much of it per acre as of slaked burnt lime to have a similar effect. Hence it is a matter of cost mainly.

I once used slaked lime as a top-dressing on clover in the early spring, getting it in as well as possible with smoothing harrows. It had a very fine effect on the clover on land where peas had been turned under and some organic matter restored to the soil. Probably this result may to some extent have been due to the release of potash, but mainly to rendering the soil sweeter for the clover. If the lime marl is finely pulverized and can be had cheap enough it can profitably be used in making conditions favorable to the clover. The only possible effect of plaster would be in the release of potash, for it does not cure acidity in the soil as lime carbonate does.

### JUST TO GET EVEN

\* Wife—Now, John, my sister Belle and her steady are coming to call on us tonight. So you must act the part of an ideally happy married man. She's not quite sure of him yet!  
John (savagely)—Leave it to me! That lobster trimmed me on a horse trade once! Leave it to me!—Chicago News.

## GROWING EARLY AND LATE TOMATOES

### Points on Varieties, Fertilization and Cultivation

"I THINK that if you would give us plain directions about the starting and growing of early tomatoes, naming the best varieties, it would be very useful to a lot of us. Also state whether it is better to get seed from the North or to use home-grown seed if we have them."

The tomato crop has always been a favorite with me. I have tried about every new variety that has been brought out in the last 40 or more years. When I first became interested in tomatoes as a youngster there were comparatively few grown and the great cropping of this vegetable for canning had not been begun.

Then all the tomatoes grown were either the big rough sorts or the little Cherry and plum varieties. The smooth and solid tomatoes of today had not been produced. The largest variety was the Mexican Chihuahua. It was large and solid, but awfully rough, and the only smooth sorts were the small ones I have mentioned.

About 1865 or thereabouts the first really smooth tomato was brought out and called the Tilden. This was really a pretty and smooth red tomato, but it had very big hollow seed cavities and was far from being solid. Still its perfect smoothness made it popular, and for a time it became the

side by side and could not see any difference in them. Both are very early, and both were apt to grow ridgy. Some market gardeners away up near the Canada line started in to try to make a smooth tomato of the Earliana, and they have succeeded well. I have grown tomatoes from their seed for several years, and I have found that in getting the earliest it is well to get the seed from as far north as practicable. They come earlier than seed saved here. But for the late varieties home-grown seed selected from the best, smoothest, most solid and meaty and prolific plants are as good as any you can buy from the North.

The Earliana is the earliest tomato I have ever tried. Next and very close behind it comes Bonny Best, not a week later, and a more solid and rounder and prettier colored tomato. John Baer was sent out two or three years ago as the earliest of all. I have grown it two seasons and will drop it for Bonny Best, as it is full two weeks late, and in fact no earlier than Stone, which is so largely planted for the canners. While Stone is a good smooth solid tomato, there are other sorts as good and far more prolific. Success is one of the best main crop red tomatoes and Globe is the best pink one.

Now as to growing early tomatoes. A good rule is to sow the seed ten weeks before it is safe usually to set the plants in the open ground. I sow in a box of soil about two and a half inches deep in my little greenhouse. It takes a very small box to start a good many plants, for as soon as they are large enough to handle I transplant them 1½ inches apart in another box, setting them a little deeper. Then for the earliest I transplant to other boxes over two inches apart, and from these to a cold frame under glass sashes. As my sashes are double-glazed, I can put them in the frame earlier than where only cotton cloth is used. I set them four inches apart, and expose them to the air as much as the weather will allow, so as to get ready to stand better when set out. By the time they are to go out I want the stems to look purplish rather than green, showing hardiness.

But few have a greenhouse to start in, and where this is the case use a box in a sunny window of a warm room. A cigar box will start enough for the average garden if you transplant them to larger boxes as soon as large enough to handle.

I always take some risk in setting out the plants. A good plan is to run ridges east and west three feet apart and set the plants low down on the sunny side of the ridges. Then if frost threatens merely lean the plants over against the ridge and cover them with soil. They are then very easily released after the cold passes. I set the plants in rows three feet apart and two feet apart in rows. Set a stake by each plant six feet high and train the plants to single stems, tying this to a stake and keeping the suckers pinched out.

As a fertilization, my whole garden is covered thickly with horse manure in the fall, and this is turned under in spring and some fine bone meal or acid phosphate is worked into the soil along the rows when making the ridges. For the early crop I sow Langdon Earliana and Bonny Best. Then when these have been set in the open ground I sow seed in the frame of Red Rock, Success, Mississippi Girl and Globe to have plants coming in at their best when the earliest ones are getting inferior. Then I sow more seed of these in the open border about the first of June to make plants that will give me their best fruit just before frost, and will have plenty of well grown green tomatoes when frost comes, and these I wrap in paper and pack away in a cool place and bring out a few to ripen in the house at a time, and thus keep tomatoes for slicing till New Year.

leading sort. Then a few others of improved character appeared, and the first pink one I remember was the Acme. This is a solid sort but has been superseded by better varieties of the same color. Some markets still prefer the pink varieties, but most cities take the bright red ones in preference to these.

The greatest advance in tomatoes came when the Trophy was introduced. Col. Waring, then in Rhode Island, introduced this as being the old Chihuahua tomato gotten into a smooth skin, and he asked \$5 for 20 seed, and I paid it. I planted them early in January in my greenhouse, and got 17 plants. I grew these in pots and made cuttings of them as fast as the growth would allow and rooted the cuttings, so that by planting time I had 150 plants and sold 18 of them for half a dollar each, so that the \$5 proved a profitable investment.

Two years later I had 50,000 plants of the Trophy set in the field from seed started early, and had the first tomatoes on the market the third week in June, though the Trophy would not now be classed as an early tomato. That crop paid remarkably well. Since the introduction of the Trophy tomato we have had a regular deluge of tomato varieties, and there has every year been an effort to improve the earliness of the varieties.

The earliest tomato I tested among the early ones brought out was Maule's Earliest. Then came Spark's Earliana, which I have always thought to be a selection from Maule's, for I have had the plants