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MARKETING VEGETABLES AND SMALL FRUITS.

Packing and Shipping—Valuable Suggestions About Each Crop, Presented by Horticulturist H. H. Hume.

When the crop is grown, ready for the market, but half the work is done. The other half is to pick the product, sort it, grade it, pack and ship it and secure for it a fair sum of money in return. And while many men may grow a crop successfully, a considerable number fail right here, in the marketing of it.

One of the most important items in marketing a crop is to have a first-class or fancy crop to put on the market. Good vegetables or fruit will make its way in the market, will bring good returns, where an inferior article will sometimes bring the grower nothing back but a request for freight charges or a few postage stamps.

The early crop is what counts and everything in the power of the grower should be bent to this object,—having it early—either by planting early or quicker maturing varieties or by making everything so favorable for the growth of the plants that they will not stop or be stunted at any time from seed to matured crop.

The Kind of Package.

The standard package for the vegetable in question should always be used. It should be of exactly the same size, never short or snide. If the quantity called for by the crate is a half bushel or bushel, for instance, then let the measure be full to overflowing.

The crates should be well made. Anyone who has followed a shipment from the loading point to its destination or who has watched the unloading of a car at the market, or watched the transfer of an express shipment at some transfer point, will understand what rough handling the packages receive and how necessary it is that they be made of good material, well nailed together.

Under all circumstances have the crates neat, clean and attractive. To have a presentable looking exterior on the crate will go a considerable way toward selling its contents.

Grading.

Herein frequently lies the difference between success and failure, between profit and loss. Grade rigidly. It always pays to do so and the lower the market, the closer the grading should be done. When the market is up, inferior stuff may be sold, though it is inadvisable, in that it tends to lower the general price, but when it is down ship nothing but the very choicest. We sometimes lose sight of the fact that we must in the end pay the freight, directly or indirectly, and it is poor policy to pay freight on inferior stuff. Establish a reputation for a superior grade of vegetables or fruit, leave the inferior, unripe, misshaped and small

specimens—the culls, in short—at home.

Special Remarks on Grading Each Crop.

Cabbage.—Pack only solid, well-formed heads; discard those which are soft and leafy. If these latter are packed they settle a great deal in transit and do not open up well. A slack crate is always at a discount.

Cucumbers.—Discard all half-grown, stunted and misshapen cucumbers and do not pack wilted or over-ripe ones. Choose well developed, smooth, well-colored fruits. Those showing a great deal of white, even though well colored on one side, are not good sellers.

Radishes.—Look out for pithy specimens—they should not be shipped; pick at just the right stage and do not let them become over-ripe. They should be well washed, and perfectly clean. Do not bruise the leaves.

Eggplant.—Do not ship diseased or green fruit. See that each package contains only those of uniform size.

Squash.—These are usually good carriers. Don't pick them too green. See that no wilted, or soft ones get into the crates.

Potatoes.—Do not allow them to sun-burn. This gives them a bitter taste and renders them inedible. Beware of rotten specimens. These in contact with good ones may often cause a great deal of rot before the market is reached. Do not bruise; handle them carefully. Grade well as to size: a lot of small ones in a barrel of larger size spoils the sale.

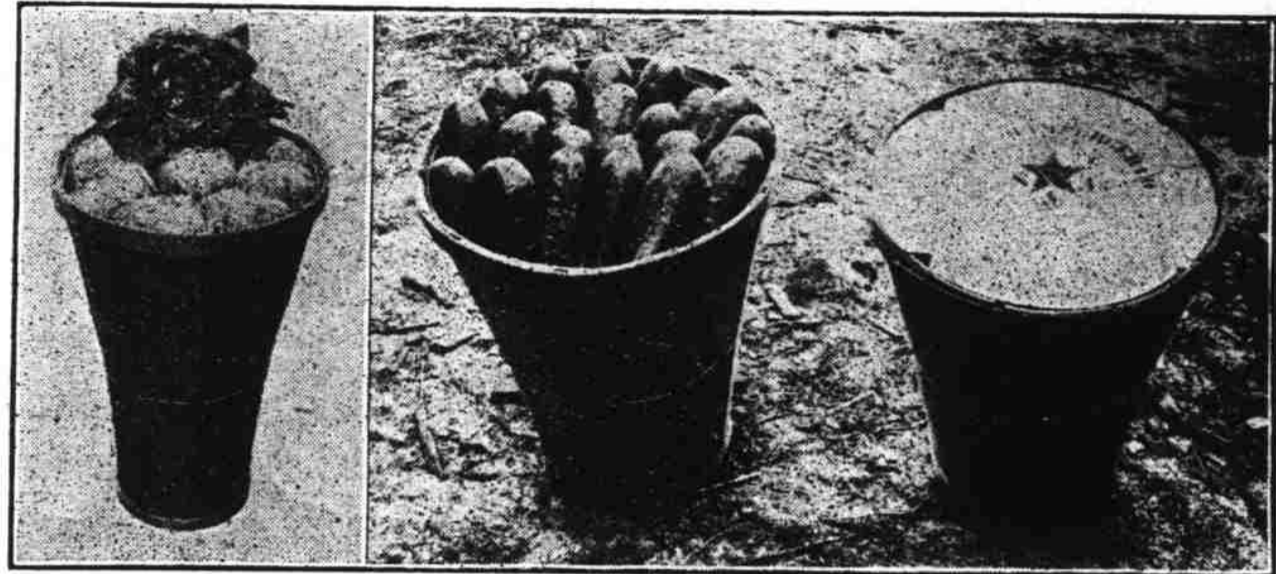
Tomatoes.—Grade carefully. The round, smooth specimens about two and one-half inches in diameter are the choicest. No rough fruits should go into the package. Look out for rotten ones. Pick when fully matured and just beginning to color. If to be shipped a greater distance, then somewhat greener. Always wrap each specimen with paper. Beware of over-ripe ones.

Beans.—Avoid in particular diseased pods, indicated by the appearance of more or less roundish red spots on the pods. These are unsalable. See that they do not become wilted before packing.

Peas.—Not over-ripe, not half-grown—both these extremes must be avoided. But little time should elapse between picking and shipping, as they must not be allowed to become wilted. Fresh green stock is always best.

Watermelons.—Beware of green melons.

Cantaloupes.—Look out for "slick" or poorly netted specimens. For the best packages only well netted fruits. Forty-five is the favorite size. No over-ripe, soft or damaged fruit should be packed. A large amount of rainfall at ripening time is ruinous, and one should go slow about



WELL-PACKED CRATES OF BIG BOSTON LETTUCE AND ARLINGTON WHITE-SPINE CUCUMBERS.

It always pays to select the very best, and put it up in an attractive manner in neat, bright packages. Leave the poor stuff at home, particularly when markets are off.

shipping at such a time. Be certain that the rain has not ruined the quality before forwarding them.

Lettuce.—Must be free from sand. Look out for seed-heads, and leafy specimens. To sell well, the crop must go in fresh and green, not wilted.

Strawberries.—Discard all nubbins (caused usually by frost injury), all small, misshapen fruit. To bring the highest price, the fruit should be well formed, highly and uniformly colored, free from sand and dirt. Be careful not to pack bruised fruit. Rain-soaked fruit will not carry well.

Dewberries.—Do not pack over-ripe specimens, they bruise too readily. A few such fruits in a basket will spoil it.

Packing.

The packages should be filled snug and full. All that can be put in without bruising or injuring, should be the rule. Many vegetables shrink after picking and others settle badly. The report comes back: "Packages too slack,"—and the shipper cannot believe it, he filled those crates full. But he little knows the amount of shaking and jostling those crates of his received between his packing house and the store of the retail merchant, enough to settle anything almost, and it takes extremely hard packing to go through without showing up slack. At the same time remember that undue pressure must not be used. Beans and peas are very prone to open up with the crates apparently only three-quarters filled; strawberries also settle a great deal.

Always pack the crates uniform throughout. It does not pay to put inferior stuff in the bottom, and good specimens on top. That is trying to create a false impression, is nothing more or less than dishonesty and it never pays. The grade of the package is established upon the poorest specimens in it.

Root vegetables, such as beets, radishes and salsify, should always be nicely cleaned and sometimes nicely washed. Use only clean, pure

water for this work. Tie in bunches after cleaning and allow them to dry off before packing if they have been washed.

Be sure that strawberries and dewberries are dried off after a rain before picking, so with peas, beans and many other fruits and vegetables. Damp packages are very likely to mold and spoil in transit.

In so far as possible grade as to size and pack by itself. More money can be made from tomatoes by sorting them carefully and putting the large sized specimens by themselves, the smaller ones in other crates, and so on.

Mark Your Package.

Stamp packages with name and address. I believe this is always best. It does the shipper good; it advertises his section besides.

Usually it is well to designate the number of specimens or bunches in the package whenever possible. This can be done with cabbage, cucumbers, cantaloupes, and bunched vegetables, such as radishes, beets and salsify. In packing watermelons keep a careful count and let your consignee know the number in each car. It will help him in selling.

H. HAROLD HUME,
Horticulturist North Carolina Department Agriculture, Raleigh.

Virginia to Organize the American Society of Equity.

Messrs. Editors: The American Society of equity will meet in Lynchburg, at Hill City Hall, on April 20th and 21st, to organize a State Union of A. S. E. Every county district local union is requested to send delegates to said convention. Public generally invited to attend.

H. B. Sherman, National Organizer, and other State organizers of national reputation will be present to address the meeting.

T. W. EVANS,
President Lynchburg District A. S. E.