



What Farmers Want to Know

By W. F. MASSEY

Notes and Comments

THE tomato crop on the Maryland Peninsula this season was grown on a larger area than usual, but the crop was short. And yet there has been more money put into the farmers' hands from tomatoes this season than ever before. The canners had a prospect for brisk sales of canned goods and they took the tomatoes at any price demanded. Tomatoes a few years back sold for \$8 a ton. This summer they have sold for \$30 and over a ton. A good many growers had contracted their crops to the canners for \$15 a ton, and when the price soared, many of these flew their contract, and there will probably be some lawsuits over the matter.

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There is a very large crop of late Irish potatoes, both in area and prospective yield. None dug up to this date (October 25th), as the tops are still green and unhurt by frost. With the coming of a killing frost, I am very much interested in seeing the outcome of a half-acre plot I pass daily. This plot is planted in rows not over two feet apart, and has been cultivated entirely by hand by two women. It has been beautifully cultivated, too, and there are no weeds nor grass in the rows. It is a little odd that in spite of the prospect of an immense potato crop all over the country, the price is actually higher than a little while back.

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Sweet potatoes, like tomatoes, were planted in a very unusually large area, and yet the crop is short and the average size of the potatoes smaller than usual. But prices keep up to such a figure that there will be a disposition to sell as fast as possible rather than take the risk of storing in the curing houses. These houses are in a very uncertain state because of the difficulty in getting hard coal, and without this they cannot make the heat needed at the outset after storing. On going around the country I have seen a number of fields of sweet potatoes being dug, and have seen but one with a really fine crop. This field I estimated could not have less than 400 bushels an acre. There must be something wrong in the general treatment of this crop when one man, with the same general character of soil and the same weather, makes a fine crop, while nearly every one else has a small crop. The element of luck has very little to do in farm matters, for in the production of any crop there is more in the man than in the land.

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We are now cutting fine heads of the Hanson and Wonderful lettuce from the open ground, and the frames have also been planted with younger plants. The lettuce are very hardy and we are not likely to have weather severe enough to damage them much before Christmas, and by that time the lettuce in the frames will be ready for use. One who has no frames or sashes in his garden loses a great deal of the pleasure of gardening. I have one three-sash frame sown broadcast with lettuce. The frame is on soil not especially rich. The lettuce plants are now with leaves about the size of a twenty-five-cent piece. This frame we will keep as dormant as possible, only using the sashes in unusually cold nights, for we want to keep these plants small and tough to plant frames after the Christmas crop is cut out, for heading in late winter and early spring, and in fact expect to keep plants enough in that frame to set out-doors in spring. Some of the plants of the late sowed crop from which the frames have now been transferred will be set in open

furrows for wintering outside. These plants, or rather plants of the same varieties, stood last winter when the cabbage plants were killed. These will be set in the same rows with the Early Wakefield cabbage and will head and come out before the cabbage claims all the room.

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I would like those of our friends who never grew the Savoy cabbage to see it now in my garden. There is such a rugged robustness, and a darker and richer green than other cabbage. And then the quality is so much superior to the common cabbage that it always pays to have some in the family garden though it does not make the great heads that inferior sorts do. The Wonderful lettuce is the same lettuce that is grown around Raleigh, N. C., under the name of Shellem lettuce, as an English gardener named Shellem introduced it there. It is also claimed by some to be identical with the variety known as the New York lettuce, but I am inclined to differ from this. It is similar in general appearance, but makes

much larger heads than the New York.

Several Reasons Why Wheat Failed

I SOWED two bushels of wheat last year on two acres of land where I had cowpeas 15 inches high. Turned them under the last of August and let stand till 18th of October. Then I sowed the wheat and dragged it in. Land was broken three inches deep and was not harrowed till wheat was sowed. I made but six bushels of wheat on a stiff red clay soil. Please tell me why I did not make more wheat."

So far as I can gather from your letter, there were several reasons for the failure. In the first place, you did not prepare the soil well. You should have kept it harrowed and tramped from the time it was plowed till seeding time and so would have gotten it fined and settled. Secondly, you sowed too little wheat. You should have sowed three bushels on the two acres. Then you sowed the wheat by hand and harrowed it in, a very poor way to put in wheat. After getting the land in the best condition, the wheat should have been put in with a wheat drill. Then you do not say anything about fertilizer. If I were putting in wheat after peas I would add 400 pounds of acid phosphate an acre to balance the organic nitrogen from the peas.

Two years ago a man with soil just like yours wrote to me that he had a field in peas and wanted to follow them with wheat. The peas were in condition to cut for hay, and I advised him to save them for feed and then to disk the land thoroughly and get it as fine as possible with disk and spike harrow and to add 400 pounds of acid phosphate an acre and to drill in five pecks of wheat an acre. He did as directed and made 30 bush-

els of wheat an acre. He would of course have gotten more humus-making material in the soil by turning the peas under, but it would have been difficult that late to have gotten the soil properly settled for wheat, and by feeding the pea hay and returning the manure to the land as a top-dressing on the wheat the soil would have lost nothing. He did not, so far as I know, use the manure in this way. But he made the wheat a fairly good crop.

Another man in an adjoining county practiced the same method and he too made 30 bushels an acre. He sowed peas again after the wheat and put the land in wheat again with the same treatment as before, and made 40 bushels an acre. Getting the soil in perfect order and seeding liberally with the drill with plenty of phosphatic fertilizer will make wheat, if the soil is adapted to wheat, as most of the Piedmont soil is.

Curing Hams and Bacon

PLEASE give me the best method for curing hams and bacon."

There are different ideas about the curing of hog flesh. Some use the dry salting method and some use the brine method, and first-class meat is made in both ways. I was raised to consider the dry salting method the

THE BUSINESS FARMER'S CALENDAR: SIX THINGS TO DO THIS WEEK AND NEXT

GET in the wheat crop without delay, in case the work has not already been done.

2. Oats may still be planted in the lower half of the Cotton Belt, if the work is done right away. Try to get them in by November 15 at the outside.

3. Rye is about the only cover crop we can plant this late without danger of winter-killing. Abruzzi is the best variety.

4. Ordered those fruit trees yet? Don't forget some pecans, scuppernongs and crape myrtles.

5. Don't let the stumps have any rest—keep after them till you have a stump-free farm.

6. Harvesting should be rushed to completion, so the stock may have the run of the fields.

only one. My mother was a famous hand at meat-curing, and taught me how to cut the hog and cure the meat. In later years I tried the brine method because I found a friend successful in making the best of hams in this way, and it is certainly far less work than dry salting. Hence for many years I used the brine method till I had no hogs to kill and no smoke-house and have had to depend on buying my meat already cured. Sometimes I get good and sometimes poor hams, for as a rule I cannot get here home-cured meat, but have to take the packing house hams which are not the real thing of my early manhood at home by any sort of comparison.

In the first place, let the meat get perfectly cold before you cut the hog up at all. You cannot cut and trim the meat properly till it is cold and firm. Cut the hams with a short hock and trim them in good rounded shape. Make a brine strong enough to float an egg, and pack the meat in this for three days. Then take it out and either make a new brine or boil and skim the first and return the meat, putting hams and shoulders in a cask to themselves and the thin meat by itself. Keep this last in brine ten days. I add to this brine an ounce of saltpetre for each 100 pounds of meat. The hams and shoulders are let stay in the brine three weeks. Then take out and hang and smoke with any sort of wood except pine, or with corn cobs. Corn cobs smothered down with green cedar brush make an excellent smoke. When properly smoked, make a mixture of black molasses and black pepper and paint the meat over with this. Wrap on thick paper and put in cotton bags and dip these in whitewash and hang in a dark house. The side meat after smoking can be packed down in bran or oat chaff. The hams and shoulders will be at their best at the next year's killing time.

Locust Trees

"SOME time ago I saw a statement from you that the locust tree does not injure the land. I think you stated that it was the yellow locust, but some catalogs mention this locust as a shrub. I wish to grow some for posts. What is the botanical name of the yellow locust?"

The yellow locust is also called in some sections the black locust. Botanically it is *Robinia pseudocacia*. There are some small shrubby forms of *Robinia* native in North Carolina. *Robinia viscosa* is a smaller tree than *Robinia pseudocacia*, but still a tree. Its flowers are not so sweet-scented as those of the yellow locust, which are white and fragrant. The *Robinia hispida* is a shrub and native to the North Carolina mountains and the pine barrens. It has very pretty racemes of rose-colored flowers. The common locust, as all the *Robinias*, belong to the legume family, and like peas and clover have nitrogen-gathering bacteria on their roots, and one will always find the soil about a locust tree maintaining its fertility and not robbing crops growing near it. The tree is a rapid grower. I grew at Raleigh trees large enough for posts in eight years from the seed.

Sowing Spinach

"HOW late can I sow spinach seed to winter over for cutting in early spring?"

I find that here in southeastern Maryland the best time to sow the latest crop of spinach is the last week in September. South of Virginia, the seed can be sowed in October and get large enough to winter well, and in most sections will be ready to cut in late February. My first sowing is now in use for the table. This plot was sowed in August. Another plot sowed early in September is almost large enough to cut, and the third plot has just been sowed. You can sow spinach seed in February for spring use, but it runs to seed soon and does not last much longer than that sowed in October. But you should have now some of the early-sowed spinach for cutting. By making the several sowings that I do I can have spinach ready for use at least till Christmas, and if the winter is not a hard one, I will be able to get fresh cutting most of the winter, for usually there is but a short time when the leaves get singed on the edges and are not in eating condition.

Planting Strawberries

"WHEN is the best time to set strawberries? I notice in The Progressive Farmer that September is advised. I set some last November, manuring them heavily with hen house manure, and they nearly met in the rows by late spring, but had a small crop of berries. I have selected a place in my garden and have covered it with stable manure. Please tell me what to do now and when to set the plants."

I have found that November is the best time for setting strawberry plants anywhere from Maryland southward. I have set them in November in North Carolina and made a full crop the next spring. Our large growers here set them in November. Better plow the manure under and apply acid phosphate at the rate of 1,000 pounds an acre.

Grapes in Florida

"WILL Niagara grapes do here (Pensacola)? Old-timers say that the mildew gets them."

I would suppose that the Niagara and other grapes will grow all right on the Gulf Coast. Of course mildew will get them anywhere if you do not spray to prevent it. To grow grapes and other fruit anywhere we must understand that spraying is essential to the getting of healthy plants and plenty of fruit.