



## What Farmers Want to Know

By W. F. MASSEY

### GROWING EARLY TOMATOES

**Plant Seed in Boxes Now for Later Transplanting—Some Facts About Varieties and Cultivation**

DIFFERENT varieties of tomatoes require from 90 to more than 100 days to make ripe fruit from time of sowing the seed. Therefore in order to get the earliest fruit we must not only get an early variety, but must start early, for the earliest varieties demand more than 100 days when a large part of the growth is made in the cool of the season of the year. A good rule, which I have often stated, is to sow the seed ten weeks before it is safe to set the plants in the open garden.

This means in the upper South that the seed should be sowed early in February. It also means that they should be sowed where the temperature is high enough to grow them, for tomatoes will not thrive in a night temperature of less than 60 degrees.

We can get this in a regularly heated room in the dwelling where there is a sunny window. In such a room the seed can be sowed in a small box of light and fertile soil, and it will be still safer to use a pane of glass over the box till the plants appear. On a larger scale the proper conditions can be had in a hotbed under glass sashes. Where there is a greenhouse it is easy to start the plants in shallow boxes. This is the plan I use. A hotbed is all right for starting, but its heat will not last indefinitely, while in the greenhouse with a boiler and hot water piping we can maintain a uniform temperature.

Whatever means are used for starting the plants, it will be of little advantage to start early if the plants are allowed to grow up thickly in the box or bed where sowed. As soon as they are large enough to handle they must be transplanted to other boxes, set deeper and given more room, and finally must be set in a frame protected either by cloth or glass for several weeks before setting in the open ground. Set in the frames four inches apart each way a comparatively small box started will occupy a large space finally in the frames.

All this involves a great deal of trouble and care, but it is essential if you are to get tomatoes early. The more frequently the plants are transplanted before setting in the garden the earlier the ripening tomatoes will be had. Tomato seed sowed in a hotbed and allowed to grow up thick and spindling will be little earlier than seed sowed outdoors. I have seen plants sent out by those who grow them for sale, which were hardly worth buying. They were grown too thickly just so as to sell the plants cheaply. But these plants are not as cheap as properly grown plants at five times the price. No one can grow early tomato plants as they should be grown for less than \$2.50 per 100, and when a grower sells them for about that per thousand they must of necessity be poor plants, and you had as well sow the seed in the open ground in April as to use such plants.

In my own garden I sow the seed in a shallow box or boxes in my greenhouse about the tenth of February. As soon as the plants are large enough to handle, even before they have made anything but a pair of seed leaves, I transplant into other boxes about an inch apart, setting the plants deeper than where they started from seed. When they begin to get crowded in these boxes I set them in flower pots 2½ inches in diameter and height. They will grow all right in these till it is safe in March to set them in the frames. I transplant them 4x4 inches, making something over

150 plants under a 3x6 foot sash. In the frame they are kept as hardy as practicable uncovering every warm day, and if very cold weather comes cover the glass with pine straw thickly at night. In the greenhouse they will grow bright green and tender. In the frames we try to get them so toughened that the stems will get a purple color instead of the tender green. This demands constant care for weeks. When in that condition they can be set earlier than if grown tender. Anything in the garden that is worth doing at all is worth doing in the best manner. Treated in this way I have gotten ripe tomatoes in Raleigh, N. C., May 25 and here in Maryland I have gotten them June 12. Getting good early plants and following these up with good late varieties, we can easily make the tomato season run from early June till frost, and have plenty of well grown green ones to pack away and ripen till January.

When the plants are properly grown and hardened the ground is laid off in rows three feet apart and two feet apart in the rows. A good stake six feet high is set at each two-foot mark. The plants are taken up with a garden trowel, lifting a mass of

about frost. These are wrapped in paper and stored in a cool place and brought out to ripen a few at a time till Christmas.

In a garden where stable manure has been used for years the tomatoes will need nothing but acid phosphate. In my garden this is applied broadcast after the manure has been spread in the fall, and the main difficulty with me is too strong a growth. On the thinner soil of the regular fields of the farm a shovel full of old rotten manure and a big handful of acid phosphate in each hill will often make more and better tomatoes than a rich old garden spot. Most of the varieties I have named are red. If you want a pink skin tomato use the Globe and Beauty.

### The Zero Weather

HERE in the southeastern corner of Maryland we have been accustomed to brag of our mild peninsula climate, and hence we have never prepared for a Canadian winter. Therefore our water mains in the streets are frozen and we have to get water carried by hand from the few wells here and there. With the mercury marking zero on the morning of December 30 and hovering around zero most of the time for ten days, burying the water pipes a foot in the ground has proved to be insufficient. While we can manage to get along for cooking with water brought from

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

**B**ETTER get all implements needed, as well as repairs, right away. Freight is moving slowly, and in some cases not at all.

2. The same thing applies to fertilizers. It looks like it may be a case of buy early or do without.

3. Plan to get two-horse cultivators and make it "a row-at-a-time" this year. This is one of the best ways we know of to save labor.

4. Run those terrace lines yet? Better do it right away, building them high and wide.

5. Don't burn anything you can plow under.

6. Keep the plows going every dry day.

7. Make every fence row spick and span by cutting all bushes and briars along it.

soil with each, and are conveyed to the garden in shallow boxes. A hole is previously opened at each stake and on the south side. Each hole is filled with water before setting the plant and the plant at once set in the water and the soil pulled in. Set in this way the plants never wilt, and in fact are usually in bloom when set. They are kept regularly tied to the stake loosely and all side shoots kept pinched off, thus training the plant to a single stem.

Spraying with Bordeaux mixture is begun in the frame, and continued in the garden every ten days till the tomatoes are half grown or longer if any signs of leaf blight appear. With the foliage kept good the early varieties will keep bearing till frost, provided they are kept clean and well fed. But we of course do not depend on them entirely, but sow later varieties to keep a full supply at all times. The earliest tomato is the Earliana. It has the good habit for the market gardener of ripening its whole crop early and then quitting. This is not so good for the home garden, and as Bonny Best is but little later and a much better tomato and will keep in bearing longer, I have discarded the Earliana. For late use the Stone is more generally grown, as it is wanted by the canners. Greater Baltimore is more prolific. This year I am trying two new ones, Puritan and Red Head, and may find them good.

I sow some of the later varieties in a bed in the open garden early in April. These plants are set as soon as large enough three by four feet, and let take their natural growth on the ground without any pinching. Then the last of May I sow more seed to make a late crop that will give me abundance of well grown green fruits

wells, and there are a number of flowing artesian wells here, the bath-rooms are out of commission. Some claim that their gas pipes are frozen and certainly the gas flows weakly.

No such cold has been experienced here for more than fifty years, yet many things in the garden seem to be surviving. Out-door lettuce and cabbage are gone. Lettuce in the frames is living but not growing any; spinach is badly scorched but the plants are green at the base and will come out. Chinese Celestial radishes have the tops frozen off but are not killed. Several loads of manure are right where they were dumped, and are probably badly damaged from heating, for our usual winter cover of manure had been but partly spread when the blast came as we were later than usual in getting the manure hauled. Perhaps the stock of cold will be used up and none left for spring. Some have a notion that a hard winter is always followed by an early spring, but I have seldom seen it so.

### Making a Lawn

I HAVE told many times in this page all about a lawn, but people do not notice what is in the paper till they want some special information and so we have now the usual inquiries as to the making of a lawn. Some differences must be made in the grasses used in different sections and soils. A lady who failed to sign her name says that she has written to several seedsmen, and one firm told her that the lawn must be sowed in the fall, and another one told her that spring is the only time, and she is puzzled.

As a rule in all parts of the South the fall sowing of lawn grass is best.

But nevertheless good lawns can be made from spring sowing. The most important matter is the condition and fertility of the soil and its physical nature. A sandy soil can be gotten in order and sowed earlier than a clay soil, and needs some difference in the seed. The upper Piedmont section too needs some special treatment as to seed.

In preparing for a lawn where the soil is not quite fertile I would start in the late spring, break the land deeply, fertilize and sow cowpeas thickly. Disk these down in August and lime the land well and put in good order after harrowing in the lime. Then in the upper Piedmont sections sow a mixture of equal parts Kentucky bluegrass, redtop and perennial rye grass, 50 pounds an acre, and then scatter a little white clover seed, say one pound an acre, and brush all in and roll smooth if the soil is dry. Sow in October or late September.

In the coast country and on sandy soil treat in same way and sow Canada bluegrass, Rhode Island bent grass and sheep fescue equally mixed and sowed at rate of 50 pounds an acre. The great cause of failure in getting grass is too thin sowing. To make a good lawn we must have the grass very thick, and we need not expect grass if the whole lawn is covered with trees. In the far South the carpet grass, Paspalum platycaule, and Bermuda will make a good lawn.

### Western or Maine Seed Potatoes

WHAT is your opinion of planting seed potatoes from Michigan and Wisconsin rather than Maine? I have always planted the Maine seed, but am informed that the other seed are just as good and seem to be even more resistant to cold. As I plant 80 acres of early potatoes, it is a matter of some importance.

If I was planting Northern seed at all I would prefer the Western seed as not being infested with the black shank and other diseases that may be gotten in the Maine seed. But as a rule I would always plant home-grown late fall or second crop seed. While these are a little slower in sprouting and hence a few days later they make often double the crop of the Northern seed. A letter from a potato grower in the greatest potato-growing county in New Jersey says that his trial last year of Southern second crop showed that they made just twice the crop of the Maine seed.

### Cloth Versus Glass

I RATHER expect that our friends who are depending on cloth-covered frames for lettuce will find it inadequate, unless like some large growers they have run steam pipes in the frames. With the double-glazed sashes zero weather has no terrors for lettuce in well banked frames. Two frames in my garden were left open for manuring and sowing this month in radishes, beets and onions for plants to transplant later. Now I have to wait for the soil to thaw before putting manure in them, for manure on the deeply frozen soil would keep it frozen. Nevertheless, seed time and harvest have not failed and will not. But get your seed as soon as possible.

### Soil for Legumes

WHAT is the best soil for peanuts, soy beans and velvet beans? Peanuts delight in a sandy soil. Soy and velvet beans will thrive on any land that is well drained and not too acid. Velvet beans will grow on poorer land than any other crop I am familiar with. Some of the early varieties will mature as far north as southeast Maryland in a fair season. For Arkansas I would use the Mammoth Yellow soy bean as a forage crop rather than velvet beans.

The man who's wise will advertise.