

# RANCH AND RANGE

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## POTATO CULTURE.

A recent bulletin of the New York Cornell Experiment Station shows the average yield of potatoes in the United States is far below what it should be. This bulletin states that "the average yield of potatoes throughout New York is not more than one-half what it should be and what it would be if better methods were practiced." This low yield is not due, as a rule, to poverty of the soil, because "all soils of ordinary fertility contain sufficient potential plant food to produce abundant crops," and a part of this potential plant food can be made available for the use of plants by tillage, and drainage, if necessary. The experiments of the Cornell Station, which have now covered four seasons, were planned with a view to learning what superior tillage and care would do in the way of unlocking the hoarded fertility of the soil and increasing the yield of the crops.

The soil on which the potatoes were grown had been continuously under crop without fertilizers since the winter of 1893-94 except that cover crops of rye, crimson clover or wheat, to be turned under in the spring, have as a rule been grown. But the growth of these has necessarily been so small and the cropping so intensive that the soil is beginning to show a deficiency of humus, indicated by its tendency to become hard and compact under beating rains; for "in order to keep a soil permanently in good physical condition it is absolutely necessary that organic matter be returned in some way, either by green manuring or the use of barn manures." Notwithstanding this fact, the yields in the Cornell experiments have been much above the average each year. This was as true of 1898 as of previous years, in spite of the additional fact that the latter season was one of severe drought and the soil used in the experiments "is gravely and porous and especially subject to injurious effects from drought."

"It is probable that frequent and deep plowing has done much to bring and keep the land productive. So far as the plowing is concerned all plants have received the same treatment. The land has been turned from two to three times each year, and the pulverizing which has resulted therefrom has liberated sufficient plant food to mature large crops. In addition to the plowing the land has been frequently harrowed and cultivated and the intensive culture which has been given has liberated all the plant food that could be used by the growing crops with the amount of moisture that was present."

A fact clearly brought out by these experiments is that "success with potatoes depends largely upon the preparation of the soil before the potatoes are planted. Plowing should be deep, and at the time of planting the soil should be mellow and loose."

Only first class marketable potatoes should be used for seed. These should be cut into pieces averaging two strong eyes. "Seed should not be cut for any considerable period before planting. If it becomes necessary to delay planting for some considerable time after potatoes are cut, the cut pieces should be dusted with plaster and spread out in a moderately moist, cool place."

Early planting has usually given best results, but this necessitates careful spraying with Bordeaux mixture and Paris green to protect the plants from diseases and insects. Early and deep planting and frequent and level tillage are especially important in soils like that used in these experiments, which are likely to be seriously affected by drought.

The methods of planting and cultivation used at the Cornell Station in 1898 were as follows:

"The pieces were dropped in the furrows directly after the furrows had been opened, one piece being put in a place and at distances 14 inches apart in the row. A furrow was opened (with a shovel plow) in the middle of the space left when the first furrows were opened. This served to cover the potatoes, the earth being ridged up directly over the potato row. The planting was done on May 10. The soil was then left undisturbed until May 28. The ridges which were left over the seed potatoes covered them to a depth of about eight inches. By May 28 the weed seeds which were in the surface soil had germinated and the whole surface was covered with tiny weeds. A spike tooth harrow was fitted with a piece of two by four scantling placed diagonally across underneath the frame and held in place by the harrow teeth. The harrow thus rigged was used upon the potato plats, being first run lengthwise of the rows, and then crosswise. The weight of the driver on the harrow was necessary in order to make it do the leveling as required. The benefits derived from this treatment were that all the weeds were destroyed, the surface crust was broken, all clods and stones were removed from above the row and deposited in the center of the space between the rows, the surface was leveled and in every way the conditions were made favorable for the rapid growth of the potatoes, and they appeared above the ground in three or four days."

In general it may be said that "on soils which are not well drained, either naturally or artificially, and on clay or clay loam soils, potatoes may be planted somewhat shallow and slight hilling may be practiced with benefit."

"If planting is done very early in the spring the ridges may be permitted to remain for ten days to two weeks before harrowing down. If planting is done somewhat late the ridges should be harrowed within one week after planting. In the case of the early planting there is usually enough moisture present so that the ridging may temporarily prove a benefit by enabling the soil to become warm. In the case of late planting all the moisture should be conserved, and this is best done by leveling the ridges.—Bulletin No. 92, Agricultural Department, Washington, D. C.

## ASPARAGUS CULTURE.

A large acreage of asparagus is being planted in Walla Walla, Mr. Will Starrett stating he has sold 50 pounds of seed this spring, and one pound is sufficient for two acres or more. Two years ago last fall the *Statesman* planted about 50 roots and this year there has been sufficient to supply a family of six and then let our neighbors help themselves. To show how it grows, on

Sunday afternoon we cut all there was in sight for dinner, and the following afternoon, after the warm rain of the night previous, went out to look at it and found enough for three good meals growing again, some of it an inch and a half thick. There is always a market for this kind of all vegetables, for it is the first vegetable to make its appearance and will stand shipping better than any other.

## OPENED THE WRONG END.

An exchange tells a story of an Ohio man who, having some apples to spare, consigned a few barrels to a Cleveland firm. On opening one of the barrels, the commission man thought best not to offer them for sale. The owner not receiving speedy returns, came in to find out the reason. The commission man opened the barrel and said: "Those are not even first-class cider apples."

An instant's gaze and the answer came: "You have opened the wrong end."

Sure enough, when the other end was opened there was a barrel of apples that would suit almost any one.

## PUT IT IN WRITING.

How many people are living in poverty or wretchedness because they did not take the precaution to "Put it in writing!" It does not matter that you have perfect confidence in the person with whom you are dealing. It is not always a question of confidence; it is a question of business, and the way to do business is in a business way. It takes but a short time to put a business proposition in writing, and often saves annoyance, lawsuits, bickerings, misunderstandings and the making of enemies of good friends. People do not always understand a business transaction in the same way, but when put in writing there is very little chance for dispute.

Always do business on business principles, no matter with whom you are dealing; whether with relative, friend or stranger. It avoids disputes, losses, very unpleasant experiences and often straining, if not breaking, of friendship.

By this advice to put all business propositions of any importance in writing, I do not by any means indorse

the maxims which are floating in the world, such as "Keep your eyes peeled," "Look out for number one," "Have your eye-teeth cut," "Take care of yourself," etc. These are dangerous maxims. Do not start out in life with the idea that you must deal with the people as if they were rascals.

What I wish to emphasize is the fact that, by taking a little pains when the terms of a contract are fresh in the mind, serious trouble may be avoided. Parties with whom you deal will think all the more of you for being thus business-like. It is good practice to learn to write contracts out. In this way one learns to be systematic, careful, painstaking, accurate.—*Success*.

## GOVERNMENT SEED CONTRACT.

The Department of Agriculture at Washington has awarded the annual contract for seeds this year to Charles Parker, a seed-grower of Santa Clara county. This is the first time that the contract has been secured by a Californian. The successful bid was \$64,900, but the entire amount of the annual appropriation, \$130,000, will be expended, one successful bidder securing the remainder upon the same basis as his bid. The seeds to be forwarded to Washington will be 21 carloads, and will include several carloads each of the various kinds of garden vegetables, beets, beans, cabbage, lettuce, etc., and several carloads of the famous California sweet peas and other flower seeds. After the seed reaches Washington it will be reduced from carload lots to spoonful lots, which will be placed in small envelopes by about 200 women and girls. About 14,000,000 of these envelopes will be apportioned among the various senators and congressmen for gratuitous distribution all over the country.

*Seattle Trade Register*: RANCH AND RANGE well says that the decision to shut gamblers out of the state fair grounds hereafter "will meet with general approval. It has not been very edifying to see the state in partnership with the sure thing men." It was disgraceful and especially insulting to the agriculturists of Washington. RANCH AND RANGE is taking front rank as a journal for the farmer and dairyman, and the *Trade Register* believes its excellence will win generous support in both advertising and subscriptions.

## FARMERS & DAIRYMEN



WHY HAVE ALL THE WORK AND WORRY OF MAKING AND MARKETING YOUR BUTTER WHEN YOU CAN REALIZE MORE MONEY BY SHIPPING YOUR CREAM TO US. WE WILL SELL YOU ONE OF THE BEST SEPARATORS MADE ON EASY PAYMENTS, SO MUCH EACH MONTH TO BE TAKEN OUT OF YOUR CREAM RETURNS. WRITE US FOR PARTICULARS.

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