

THE HOME GARDEN IN MARCH

"Whatever we have in any sort begun wisely it is good to finish it thoroughly."—John Ruskin.

MANY garden vegetable crops will reach maturity during March, and others during favourable autumn weather will be storing up plant energy necessary for them to survive inclement winter weather successfully. Home gardeners should therefore consider the literal interpretation of the above quotation by not neglecting any opportunity of doing everything possible to "finish thoroughly" the work in the vegetable garden which was "begun wisely."

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FROM March till the time when work in the garden will be less strenuous and exacting activities should be directed to the protection of maturing crops until harvesting is completed, and toward encouraging growth and development of crops from which winter and early spring supplies are expected.

Onions

The onion crop is the first among crops which should mature during March. To produce long-keeping bulbs—and these should be considered of major economic importance for domestic use—dry weather conditions are necessary during the latter period of development. Everything possible should be done to prevent prolonging vegetative growth of the plants. If bulbs are well developed, no water should be applied during February and hoeing for weed destruction should be stopped during the same period.

Bulbs can be considered ready for harvesting as soon as the tops turn brown and begin to change from their usually erect position. If possible, a warm, dry, sunny day, when a good wind is blowing, should be chosen for pulling the onions. If the soil is dry at the time of harvesting, so much the better. Laid in double rows with the bulbs facing each other, they will soon dry, but if wet weather is expected, removal to a dry, airy shed or other covering will be necessary.

Potatoes

As long as top growth of potatoes remains healthy and vigorous tuber development will continue and the ultimate weight of the crop will increase. Where it is practicable, and under the conditions just mentioned, the main potato crop should be permitted to mature in the normal way before digging. Haulm which has become diseased should be removed and burned before the crop is dug.

There is nothing to be gained by leaving a matured potato crop undug, as, where the rows have been insufficiently moulded, the tubers are liable to attack by the potato tuber moth, and if the soil becomes too wet, the tubers may start to grow, which will seriously impair their keeping quality.

The adoption of these recommendations may assist in preventing the loss of a valuable potato crop and in the securing of the heaviest possible yield.

Beans and Peas

Not much can be done to "hold" bean and pea crops for use at any desired time, as they are best used when tender. Climatically, however, there is a vast difference in their requirement. All varieties of beans are warm-weather, frost-tender vegetables, while peas are not only a cool-weather variety, but will stand considerable frost without damage. It is desirable, therefore, when sowing seeds for autumn crops, to space the dates so that peas will be maturing after cold conditions make further harvesting of beans impossible.

It is authoritatively stated that high quality of peas is closely related to the ratio of their sugar-starch content, and that during maturity there is a quick decrease in sugar and other soluble matter with relative increase in starch. This change, it is stated,

decreases the nutritional value of over-mature peas.

Tomatoes

Since notes on tomatoes appeared in the February issue of the "Journal," information available indicates further deterioration in the prospects of a plentiful supply of tomatoes being available from the crops of commercial growers, and again it appears necessary to stress the importance of doing everything possible to prolong the productive life of the vines so that the best possible yield may be obtained from plants growing in the garden.

Where high winds prevail satisfactory crops cannot be secured from tomato plants unless adequate shelter is provided.

Attacks on tomato plants and fruits by some injurious fungi may be greatly minimised or entirely prevented by the careful adoption of appropriate cultural practices, and the amount of disease-free fruits secured will almost certainly be increased.

Botrytis Stem Rot.—The danger of attacks by botrytis species will be less if care is exercised when tomato plants are being pruned or when leaves are removed. A sharp knife should always be used, a clean cut made, and the leaf or shoot cut close to the stem. As conditions conducive to high humidity are primarily responsible for the occurrence of this disease, removal of all leaves under the first truss of fruit before it is picked will provide for a better circulation of air around the base of the plant. Shallow cultivation of the



[Sparrow Industrial Pictures Ltd.]
Keep soil away from bulbs of onions, but be careful not to expose the roots.