

THE HOME GARDEN IN MARCH . . .

soil around and near the plants will assist in their protection from botrytis and other injurious fungi.

Manuring.—The use of unbalanced fertilisers for tomato plants is a common source of trouble. Excessive manuring at planting time and subsequent starvation are often responsible for such disorganisation of plant tissues that resistance to disease is weakened. The reverse practice will have similar disastrous results. To maintain tomato plants in healthy condition fertilisers should be applied with discretion throughout the plants' growth. This applies especially to the use of excess nitrogen.

Caterpillars.—Unless action is taken against caterpillars, they may cause losses of fruit out of all proportion in value to the cost of treatment, which, when properly applied, will exterminate them. Powdered arsenate of lead, ½oz. to each gallon of Bordeaux mixture, is specially recommended.

Kumaras

During March main attention to kumaras should be directed toward preventing the vines rooting at the nodes. Provided growth is not too abundant, this may be done by occasionally raising them by hand or with the handle of a hoe. Although the tubers are quite good to eat when they have reached consumable size, digging before they are fully matured will often substantially reduce the yield. If, as sometimes happens, the

foliage is attacked by some leaf-eating insect, Bordeaux mixture with the addition of arsenate of lead as recommended for the control of caterpillars on tomatoes will usually prove effective. If nicotine sulphate is preferred to arsenate of lead, the spray should be applied during the warmest part of the day.

Carrots (Spring)

With allowance for climatic differences, seed for the production of early spring carrots is generally sown in March. To ensure good seed germination the soil should be worked down to a fine tilth and the bed made in a well-drained position. It is a waste of time and effort to attempt to produce early spring carrots on badly-drained soil. Where drainage is not considered satisfactory a raised bed will be necessary, and for convenience the bed should not be more than 3ft. wide.

In preparing land for this crop no stable manure or green manure should be dug in immediately before sowing the seed.

If 2oz. of superphosphate a square yard is broadcast and worked into a suitable part of the garden just cleared of a cabbage or potato crop which had been well manured, a bed fertile enough to produce a good crop of carrots should result. If additional fertiliser is required, blood and bone manure applied in equal quantity will give good results.

When the bed is ready for sowing the shallow furrows into which the seed is to be sown should be made across the bed and not lengthwise. If this method is adopted, weeding and thinning can be done without treading on the soil among the young plants. This is important, particularly on soils of heavy texture, as treading on such soils during winter will set them down hard, which is inimical to best production.

Carrot seed sown during March should require only light soil covering. During dry weather the surface of the bed must be kept moist.

In shallow, heavy soils a short, stump-rooted variety such as Early Horn will be suitable, but in suitable friable loams good results may be obtained with seeds of Chantenay, Early-krop, or Champion Scarlet Horn.

Lettuce

Lettuce plants from seed sown during late January or early February should be set out as soon as convenient so that they may be fairly well grown before really cold weather begins. Although lettuce is a cool-weather plant, good crops cannot be grown during frosty, cold, or inclement conditions.

As with spring carrots, the best possible drainage is necessary as well as fertile soil. The seedlings, although they will not develop into full-sized lettuces, should not be set closer than the usual distance; 12in. between the plants each way will not be too much space to allow for cultivation during winter. Varieties specially recommended for this planting are Imperial 615 and Neapolitan-Winter Market.

Rhubarb

Although spring- and early summer-bearing rhubarb will now be dormant and non-producing, it is a mistake to assume that the area occupied by the roots can be neglected and allowed to become a bed of weeds. Such undesirable growth extracts from the soil valuable plant food which should be stored by the rhubarb roots to produce next season's crop.

If the bed has not been properly attended to since pulling stopped, this should be done without delay. A heavy dressing of blood and bone manure, 2 or 3 handfuls to each root, and well worked into the soil, will be beneficial. If available, a substantial mulch of well-rotted farmyard manure spread over the bed will greatly assist in maintaining the fertility of the soil and its humus content, which are necessary for the production of heavy rhubarb crops.

Winter- and ever-bearing varieties should be kept free of weeds and heavily fertilised, and seed stalks should be cut as soon as they are observed, as they drain the roots of stored fertility if permitted to develop.

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