



THE HOME GARDEN IN JANUARY

By S. O. GILLARD, Vegetable Instructor,
Department of Agriculture, Auckland.

IN January the flush of the growing season is over and the garden filled with newly-planted, growing, and maturing crops, but because the garden is fully planted it does not mean that further attention is not required; on the contrary there is much to be done. The hoe and other cultivating implements should be used frequently to keep weed growth down and conserve soil moisture. Weed control is much easier at this time of the year because weeds which earlier in the season had to be gathered up after cultivation will now die rapidly in the hot sun after hoeing. Weeds not only rob the plants of food and soil moisture and are hosts for disease, but if allowed to develop their seed will increase the weed population next season.

DURING January care should be taken to see that the soil moisture is sufficient for good growth, especially for such crops as lettuce, peas, beans, and celery, these vegetables being influenced to a great extent by the moisture content of the soil. Asparagus beds and pumpkin and melon crops will require hand weeding.

At this period of the year liquid manure can be applied with advantage to most crops. Liquid manure can be made from animal manure tied in a piece of sacking and suspended in water; about 2lb. of reasonably fresh manure to a gallon of water will make a suitable mixture. Excellent

liquid manure can also be made with soot (1lb. to a gallon of water and treated in the same manner as animal manure). Nitrate of soda and sulphate of ammonia, 1oz. of either to 4 gallons of water, are also useful liquid manures. If the soil is very dry, it is advisable to water the soil before applying the liquid manure.

Tomato plants should be tied to supports and the lateral growths removed regularly as they develop. In districts where blight is experienced the plants should be sprayed regularly.

Protecting Potato Crops

Growing potato crops should be kept earthed up to protect them from the potato moth, which is usually very active during this period. For the control of late blight it will be necessary to spray at frequent intervals with Bordeaux mixture (a certified copper oxychloride may be used in the place of Bordeaux).

Mature potato crops should not be left in the soil after the tops have died down. At this period of the year crops left for any length of time after the skins of the tubers have become firm are liable to be damaged by sunbaking and to attack from the potato tuber moth. If the soil has been dry, the tubers may start quickly into second growth when rain is experienced.

Kumara runners should be lifted periodically to prevent them attaching themselves to the soil. If this is done regularly, the vines will not mat together and are much easier to turn.

The soil should be drawn up to sweet corn as it grows to help support the plant, and where exposed to strong winds plants should be supported with stakes. As the cobs form, a watch should be kept for signs of caterpillars which may be attacking the cobs and are usually found at the silk end of the cob. For control apply D.D.T. as a spray or dust.

Heading photograph by Sparrow Industrial Pictures Ltd.