



The Home Garden in September

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

SEPTEMBER is generally recognised to be a favourable time to begin the new season's gardening operations in earnest. With the advent of longer days and more sunshine the soil should have warmed up sufficiently to promote satisfactory germination of the hardier kinds of vegetable seeds. In northern districts where late frosts are unlikely seed of the more tender kinds of vegetables such as potatoes, cucumber, marrows, and pumpkins, and plants of egg fruit and tomatoes can be set out. Plant protection such as cloches and hot-caps will still be necessary for frost-tender subjects if they are grown in colder localities.

IN preparation for later cropping, areas in green crops should be dug over, and ground left fallow during winter can be broken down. The soil should be stirred up around planted crops. Cultivation of the soil, especially at this time of year when frequent rains consolidate the surface, is very important in the promotion of plant growth. The soil should be drawn up to established crops of cabbage, cauliflower, peas, and broad beans as they grow to provide support for the plant. When drawing the soil up to the plants a wide rather than a narrow ridge should be formed, as this provides better support and rooting area. Early potatoes should be kept well earthed up as a partial protection from frost. Seedling lettuce, onions, cabbage, and cauliflower can be set out.

Seeds of parsnips, carrots, spinach, onion, lettuce, radish, beetroot, silver beet, peas, and leeks can be sown in the warmer and better-drained parts of the garden provided the soil will break down to the required tilth. Clayey soils if sticky should be handled patiently and worked only when conditions will allow.

Established crops such as silver beet, cabbage, and cauliflower will benefit from weekly applications of liquid

manure. This can be made from animal manure placed in a sack and suspended in a large container of water until the liquid is the colour of strong tea, or nitrate of soda, 2oz. to 4 gallons of water, can be applied at the rate of 1 pint to each plant. On wet soils the nitrate of soda may be applied direct to the soil at the rate of 1oz. to 12 plants, care being taken not to let the fertiliser touch the foliage.

Asparagus

Asparagus seed may be sown in September, but it is probably more satisfactory for the home gardener to procure 1-year-old crowns and plant them in June (later in southern districts). In northern districts established beds will now be sending up leaf stalks or spears. When they have made about 6in. of growth spears should be cut 2in. below the surface of the soil, using a sharp, long-bladed knife. A square-ended blade sharpened at the end like a chisel is very suitable for cutting the spears. Care should be taken when cutting asparagus not to damage young spears or crown buds. Weed growth should be kept down by hand weeding during the cutting period, as the hoe is liable to injure the young shoots that may be just under the soil surface. Applications of liquid manure every 14 days will increase the yield.

Good varieties are Mary Washington, Conover's Colossal, and Paradise. The last named is a recent introduction which is proving very satisfactory.

Artichokes

The globe artichoke is a vigorous perennial, the growth attaining a height of from 3 to 4ft. The large flowerheads when properly cooked make a very tasty dish. Plants may be propagated by suckers or seed may be sown in September or October and the seedlings transplanted to a permanent position during the following autumn. They require plenty of room to develop and plants should be set 4ft. apart each way. Suckers should be treated in the same way as seedlings. Flowerheads fit for use will develop the season after plants were set out and should be gathered before the scales open for flowering. Large Green and

HEADING PHOTOGRAPH: In September advantage should be taken of fine weather to do preparatory work such as placing stakes in position to support tomatoes and peas. Sparrow Industrial Pictures Ltd. photo.