

in prepared food products such as soups and pickles. Garlic produces a group of small bulbs called cloves. The whole bulb is broken up and the small cloves are planted, the best sets being those taken from the outside of the bulb.

Garlic does well in a rich, light, well-drained soil, which must be well trenched and brought to a fine tilth. Drainage is important, as garlic tends to rot in wet soil. The cloves may be planted from May to September. Draw drills 1in. deep and 12in. apart and press in the cloves from 4 to 6in. apart. If cloves are planted in May, do not cover them immediately; the soil can be replaced level as cultivation progresses. For spring planting replace the soil and level it over the cloves after setting them out.

## Growing Perennial Crops from Seed

**Asparagus:** Seed may be sown in September or October provided soil conditions are favourable. The soil should be well drained and of a fine, firm tilth with good humus content. Sow seed thinly  $\frac{1}{2}$ in. deep in rows 12in. apart and thin seedlings later to 4in. apart in the rows. If growth has been favourable plants should have reached sufficient size for planting out into a permanent bed the following August or September.

**Rhubarb:** Though most home gardeners prefer to divide up crowns from established beds, rhubarb can be grown easily from seed sown in September or October. Sow seed 1in. deep in rows 15in. apart in any fertile, well-drained soil. Seedlings should be thinned to about 6in. apart as soon as they are properly established and the young plants can be lifted and replanted in a permanent position the following spring.

No stalks should be pulled from newly planted beds until the second year and the plants should be well supplied with humus and plant food. Rhubarb does best when grown in a warm part of the garden where it is not overshadowed by hedges or trees.

In some districts rhubarb is forced by covering the crowns with boxes or straw and when this is done care should be taken to see that the covering is replaced each time stalks are pulled, because although rhubarb is not classed as frost-tender, when forced it is liable to severe damage if suddenly exposed.

**Recommended varieties** are Victoria Giant and Champion (for summer use) and the everbearing or winter sort Topp's Winter.

## Potatoes

In districts free from late frosts potatoes may be planted this month, but in most southern districts it is safer to delay planting a little longer. Government Certified seed, though dearer than uncertified seed, will be found more profitable, as usually it produces more vigorous and disease-free growth and a higher yield. Potatoes should be procured some time in advance of planting and placed in shallow trays in full light to sprout. Care should be taken to see that the sprouts do not grow too long ( $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$ in. is ideal), as sprouts tend to break off when tubers are being planted if they are too long. If tubers produce more than two strong shoots and the potato is not large enough to cut, the weakest shoots should be rubbed off,



[Sparrow Industrial Pictures Ltd. photo.]

Home seed testing is simple. The illustration shows two home-made germinators. That at left is made by inverting one saucer over another. Two layers of blotting paper are placed in the bottom saucer to ensure an even supply of moisture. The saucers must fit together neatly to prevent the blotting paper from drying. The germinator on the right is made by inverting a glass jar over two layers of blotting paper on a pane of glass. With this type the sprouting seeds can be seen without disturbing the germinator. It is usually necessary to damp the blotting paper with water each day.

as it has been noted by commercial growers that plants with more than two or three stems produce a large number of small tubers. When tubers are large they may be cut into two or more pieces, according to size, before planting, each piece having at least one shoot. Tubers should be cut into thick chunky pieces rather than thin slices and the eyes should be centrally situated and not at the edges of the pieces. If the terminal eye is at the extreme edge of a piece, its sprout fails to obtain adequate nutriment and weak secondary buds develop. Tubers should be planted within 24 hours of being cut.

## Preparation of Soil

Adequate cultivation and good soil conditions are essential for potatoes, and land containing an abundance of humus is preferable. Organic matter such as stable or farmyard manure is suitable, but should be applied some time in advance of planting. Too much nitrogen is not advisable, as it tends to produce heavy top growth at the expense of the tubers. In the absence of organic matter a fertiliser mixture of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  parts of superphosphate,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  parts of bonedust,  $\frac{1}{2}$  part of sulphate of ammonia, and 3 per cent. of sulphate of potash gives satisfactory results; alternatively equal parts of bone and superphosphate and 3 per cent. of sulphate of potash may be used. These mixtures should be applied at the rate of 8 to 12oz. to 12ft. of row.

## Planting

The most practical method of planting is to open a trench 4in. deep and broadcast fertiliser along it, mixing it lightly in the soil. Tubers can be planted in rows 2ft. to 2ft. 6in. apart with 12 to 15in. between sets in the rows. Close planting is more suitable for early crops. For early planting the soil should be ridged up over the sets, when the trench is being filled in, as this allows for better drainage and

the soil keeps warmer. As soon as plants are 2in. above the ground hoe around them and loosen up the soil between the rows to check weeds and aerate the soil. Repeat this operation every 2 or 3 weeks, as the soil must be kept well worked to grow good potatoes. When plants are about 9in. high draw the earth round the stems and repeat this operation a month or 6 weeks later.

## Harvesting

The amateur gardener generally has difficulty in judging when the crop is ready to harvest and often the quality of the potatoes is impaired by allowing them to remain too long in the ground. For early varieties digging should begin when the leaves of the plant begin to turn yellow and may continue until the crop is finished. Digging may extend over a month or more. Main-crop varieties take longer to mature, and if they are to be stored, they should be allowed to remain in the ground until the tops have died right down, as this improves the keeping qualities. When nearing maturity, especially when soil conditions are warm and a rainy period is experienced, they should be harvested promptly or the tubers will start growing and will become soft and unfit for use. When potatoes are ripe the skins are firm; if skins rub off, potatoes should be left to mature further if intended for storing.

## Diseases

Potato blight caused by the fungus *Phytophthora infestans* is the most troublesome disease in some districts, but can be controlled satisfactorily by spraying plants with Bordeaux mixture, 4oz. of bluestone and 5oz. of hydrated lime to 4 gallons of water. Applications may be necessary as often as every 10 to 14 days in districts where blight infection is prevalent. Prepared Bordeaux powders or one of