

THE HOME GARDEN IN JANUARY



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

WEEDING is usually one of the most important garden tasks to be undertaken in January. Probably all gardeners have experienced the heartbreak of returning from Christmas holidays to find that weeds have practically taken charge of the garden. Once neat rows of young seedlings will have disappeared in a sea of weed growth and even older plants are choked. Where the garden was kept very free of weeds during December the havoc will not be as great as where weeding had been less thorough, but much hard work will no doubt be necessary before order is restored. If hot, dry weather has been experienced during the Christmas period, the garden will in addition be parched and crops will suffer accordingly. Hand weeding is usually necessary and this will be facilitated if a good watering is given the night before weeding is to be done. When the soil is wet weeds may be removed more easily and with less damage to small plants.

WHEN the garden has been cleared of all weed growth which accumulated during the holiday season further control of weeds will be found relatively easy, because the hot sun will cause them to die rapidly after cultivation. Continued weeding is necessary, because considerable transpiration of moisture can occur through the leaves of weeds and this can seriously deplete soil moisture during dry weather. Two further important aspects of weed control are: That if weeds are allowed to seed, the weed population may be greatly increased next season, and that weeds are hosts of many pests and diseases which affect vegetables. It is sound gardening practice to keep the hoe going among growing crops.

Though by January the garden should be almost filled with newly planted, growing, and maturing crops and little spare ground will be avail-

able, many crops can be sown or planted this month. Dwarf beans, peas, radish, lettuce, spinach, silver beet, beetroot, carrots, turnips, and swedes may all be sown and savoy cabbage, brussels sprouts, and leeks may be planted in most districts. It is not yet too late to sow parsnips in the warmer districts and small plantings of tomatoes and sweet corn for late crops can still be made in Auckland districts free of frosts until late May.

Liquid Manure

The use of liquid manure will give an added fillip to growing crops, and salad crops, which should be grown rapidly, especially will benefit. Liquid manure can be made easily by suspending a quantity of animal manure in a sack in a tub of water; from 1 to 2lb. of fresh animal manure per gallon of water should be sufficient. Other useful liquid manures are sulphate of

ammonia and nitrate of soda at 1oz. to 4 gallons of water.

General work in the garden will include attention to tomato plants which require tying to supports and the removal of laterals from tomatoes. Mature potato crops should not be left in the ground after the tops have died and those still growing should be kept earthed up; the potato tuber moth may cause damage to both growing and mature crops if this is not done.

The runners of kumaras should be lifted periodically to prevent them from rooting.

Disease Control

Many crops will require protection from insect and disease attack at this time of the year. Where late blight of tomatoes and potatoes is troublesome infection may be prevented by regular applications of Bordeaux mixture 3:4:50 or of copper oxychloride at 1lb. to 20 gallons of water. Arsenate of lead 2oz. to 5 gallons of water or D.D.T. 1oz. to 6 gallons of water will prevent damage to tomatoes by caterpillars.

To protect the young cobs of corn from attacks by the corn ear worm, D.D.T. may be applied as a spray, using 1oz. of wettable 50 per cent. powder to 6 gallons, or as a dust.

White butterfly and diamond-backed moth are extremely troublesome in brassica crops at this time of the year and regular applications of D.D.T. will be necessary to protect the crops.

Watering

From early January until autumn rains commence, watering is necessary in most gardens to keep plants growing and to provide sufficient moisture to develop the crops fully.

Heading photograph by Green and Hahn Ltd.