



Left—Mature and unblanched foliage of sea kale. The centre seed stalk should not be allowed to grow when plants are being blanched. Right—Egg plant fruits can be thinned out when young. This will give fewer but larger fruits.

then dressed with manure in a similar manner to asparagus beds. If winters are severe, beds can be earthed up or covered with some material to guard the crowns against injury.

Varieties and Uses

Propagation by suckers from reliable plants is the best method of maintaining quality.

Buds can be prepared in several ways. To obtain large terminal buds it is normal to remove the smaller side buds when they are about egg size. These can be fried, boiled, or eaten raw. The terminal buds are usually boiled. The American method is to trim the buds and soak them in water for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. They are then drained and cooked in salted boiling water until tender (about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour) and eaten with butter and salt. Of the larger outer scales the main edible portion is the fleshy base. The inner scales are edible throughout, but the spiny centre (choke) of the bud is discarded.

The taste for globe artichokes is an acquired one and many people class them as a luxury. The main disadvantage of this plant is the relatively large amount of space it requires, but it can be planted in odd back corners of the garden.

Sea Kale

Sea kale (*Crambe maritima*) is a hardy perennial and a native of western Europe. It is grown by few gardeners, but it has a delicate flavour which should make it more popular. It is grown for its young leaves and shoots, which are normally blanched.

Soils and Fertilisers

Although sea kale will grow in any normally rich soil, a bed prepared as

for rhubarb is best. This bed should be replenished each year with organic matter or other fertilisers to keep up the fertility of the soil. A well-kept bed should remain productive for a number of years.

Sowing and Cultivation

Sea kale can be grown from seed sown under glass in June or July or outside in September and October. Early sowing should give plants for setting out in October. Seedlings need to be thinned early to give sturdy plants. Late sowing often means transplanting the following spring.

Sea kale requires plenty of space, because it has to be covered for blanching. Seedlings or plants can be set at 18 to 24 in. intervals with the crowns about 2 in. below the surface.

Root cuttings about 4 to 6 in. long can be taken and planted in their permanent positions in early spring.

At the end of the growing season the dead leaves should be removed and the bed can then be mulched with compost. About June the crowns should be covered with inverted boxes or flower pots that exclude all light. These can then be covered with sack- ing or other suitable material to keep the winter temperature comparatively high inside.

Light harvesting can begin the second season and normal harvesting lasts about 3 to 6 weeks. Growth should be watched closely and when shoots are about 5 or 6 in. tall they should be cut in the same way as asparagus. When the cutting season is finished the coverings are removed and a thin layer of soil spread over

the crowns. During the growing season sea kale will benefit from plenty of moisture and liquid manure.

Varieties and Uses

No specific varieties are available. The blanched shoots can be boiled and served with white sauce in the same way as celeriac.

Egg Plant

The egg plant (*Solanum melongena*) obtains its name from the flavour of the cooked fruit, which suggests fried eggs. Its origin is rather obscure, but it has been in cultivation for many centuries. Egg plants do well in mild climates and they could be grown to a greater extent.

Soils and Fertilisers

Soils and plant foods suitable for tomatoes are ideal for egg plants, which are gross feeders. Warm, rich, and well-drained soils are best, but moisture must be plentiful. Soil enriched with compost or other organic matter is desirable. A mixed fertiliser made up of, say, 3 lb. of sulphate of ammonia, 10 lb. of superphosphate, and 1 lb. of sulphate of potash at 3 oz. to the square yard will encourage good production.

Sowing and Cultivation

As the egg plant requires a long, warm season, it should be sown early and set out as soon as frosts are past. In Hawkes Bay seed can be sown under glass in July or early August and the plants set out in October. If transplanted carefully when about only 4 in. high, they should establish quickly. Plants should be set about 24 in. apart in rows 30 to 36 in. apart