

# Root Crops in the Home Garden



**B**Y thoughtful planning of crop rotations and successions the home gardener can avoid having cabbages, cauliflowers, and the like maturing in excessive quantities at one time, with shortages at other seasons. Spreading of planting and hence of maturity dates will help with crops of this nature. Root crops on the other hand can be harvested over a long period by use of the ground as the storage medium. In the first part of this article the growing of root crops is discussed by B. P. Coleman, Horticultural Instructor, Department of Agriculture, Auckland. The section on routine work for November is by W. G. Crawford, Horticultural Instructor, Department of Agriculture, Oamaru.

**R**OOT crops play a valuable part in the garden programme and because they are easy to grow and are practically constantly available, they may be planted in considerable quantity. The aim should be to have root vegetables of some kind all the year round.

## Soils and Manures

Most root crops grow best in deep, friable, well-drained soils high in humus content but not acid. Fresh organic material not fully decomposed is a disadvantage, because it tends to encourage forking of the roots. Rich soils or those which have been heavily manured for a previous crop very often produce good root crops without the addition of more fertiliser. Nevertheless, provided that the land is reasonably well drained and can be deeply and thoroughly cultivated, roots can be grown quite satisfactorily in a wide range of soil types.

Where it seems necessary to use fertilisers, and many soils will need them, the following balanced base mixture may be used at from 2oz. to 4oz. per square yard: 9 parts by weight of superphosphate, 10 parts of bonedust, and 1 part of sulphate (or muriate) of potash. Suitable ready-mixed garden fertilisers are also available from seedsmen.

Lime may be used at from 2oz. to 8oz. per square yard according to the nature of the soil. A light dusting of nitrate of soda after the rows have been thinned may also be desirable.

## Cultivation and Care of Crops

Land should be thoroughly and deeply cultivated for all root vegetables, especially crops such as long-rooted carrots and parsnips, and the surface soil should be worked to a fine tilth for the seed.

If fertilisers or lime are used, they may be broadcast and worked into the soil or applied along the rows, provided they do not come into direct contact with seeds or plants.

Drills  $\frac{1}{2}$ in. deep are suitable in normal circumstances for the seed of most root vegetables, but seed may be sown a little deeper if the soil is dry. If the surface soil is inclined to harden or cake, it is an advantage to sow a few radish or turnip seeds with those of carrots or parsnips, as the first two germinate quickly and produce strong seedlings which break the soil surface for the weaker carrots or parsnips. The early germinating seedlings also serve as markers until the seedlings of the main crop become established, when the markers should be pulled out.

Thinning should be done before the seedlings are more than about 2in. high. Final spacings will vary from about 2in. apart for radishes and small carrot varieties to about