

should cease early where conditions are dry or if the soil is poor.

Onions

Where onions have not yet reached maturity weeds not only use up plant food, but when conditions are damp tend to hinder ripening of the bulbs. Though some onion crops are ready for harvesting, those that were planted late or are still growing well should be kept free of weeds and pests and diseases.

Parsnips

Though parsnips are not usually lifted until early winter, it is rather late for them to be sown in most southern districts. They can still be sown where, as in northern districts, the autumn is sufficiently long to enable the plant to develop fully before winter stops growth.

Hollow Crown and Oxheart are popular varieties.

Potatoes

December is rather late for planting potatoes, and the success achieved will depend mainly on the district or dryness of the season. It is usually advisable to choose an early or second-early variety for such a late planting.

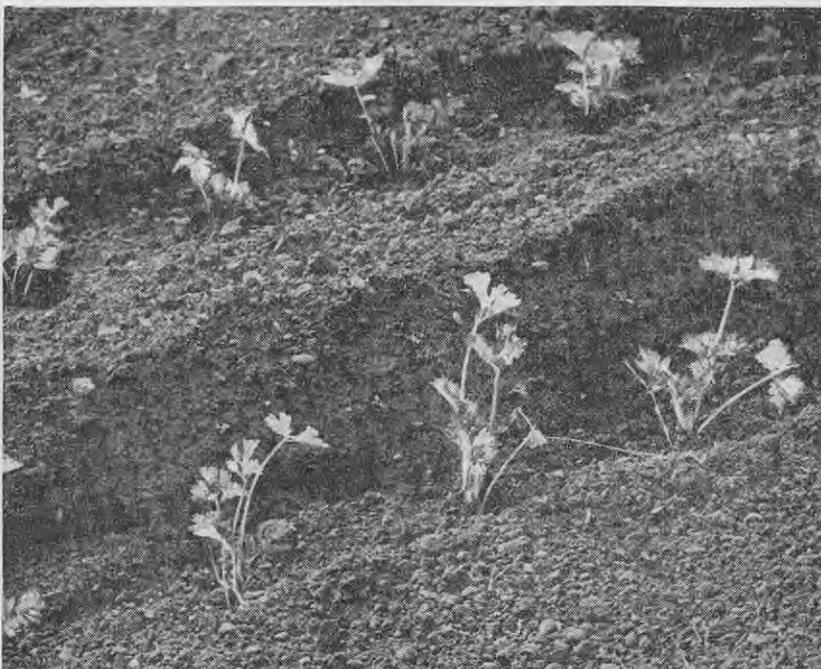
Potatoes need a well drained soil rich in humus. If fertiliser is required, it can be supplied by dusting a mixture of 3 parts of superphosphate and 1 part of sulphate of ammonia in the trench at 6 to 12 oz to every 6 yd of row before planting.

Cut or whole tubers can be planted 10 to 16 in. apart in a trench 4 to 5 in. deep taken out with a hoe. For early and very late planting a close spacing can be adopted.

The moulding or earthing up of the main potato crop and the digging of the early crop should now be proceeding. The ridges should be finished off to as sharp a point as possible to prevent the spores of potato blight from being washed down by rain to infect the tubers. It is not advisable to earth up when the soil is wet. Blight attack depends largely on the weather. Frequent spells of moist, warm weather are conducive to attack and where the weather favours the disease preventive spraying with bordeaux mixture, copper oxychloride, or zineb is advisable.

Potato blight is first seen as irregular, dark brown, water-soaked areas on leaves and stems. The leaves become limp and there may be mildew on the undersides in moist weather. The stems blacken and decay. Tubers should not be lifted when there are blight spots on the leaves, as tubers may become contaminated and later may rot in storage. Infected haulms should be removed at least 10 days before digging. If there is a doubt about the presence of blight on the tubers, they should not be stored.

HOME GARDEN IN DECEMBER



[Green and Hahn

Celery can be set out in a trench in December.

Potato Scab

There are two types of scab which infect potatoes, ordinary scab and powdery scab. They do not differ greatly in appearance, though powdery scab may develop a canker, which is much more serious. Generally scab shows as scabby spots varying from roughened, shallow depressions to corky protrusions. Barriers of cork are laid down by the tuber in an effort to exclude the scab-producing organisms. Scab may reduce the yield by 10 per cent.

Control consists of avoiding soils which have recently been heavily limed or to which heavy dressings of organic manure have recently been applied. Heavy dressings of organic matter applied the previous year so that they are thoroughly decomposed are satisfactory.

Very acid soils inhibit the development of the parasite, but apart from soil acidity the development of potato scab is influenced by soil moisture and temperature. Its development is usually favoured by conditions where soil moisture is slightly below that giving good growth.

Rhubarb

Treatment of the main varieties of rhubarb is somewhat similar to that recommended for asparagus. Harvesting of the main crop should not last beyond about eight weeks, though this

depends on the vigour of the plants, the amount of harvesting done, and the moisture content and fertility of the ground. After harvesting has been completed the plants should be given a dressing of farmyard manure, stack bottom, compost, or similar material or a complete fertiliser.

Where space permits a good plan is to have several plants of each of three varieties. An early variety which can be forced by covering it early in spring with straw or a good-sized box can be followed, as soon as the early plants require resting, by a main-crop variety which should provide supplies until small fruits are generally available. Finally an ever-bearing variety can be grown to provide supplies in late autumn and winter.

Many varieties of rhubarb in home gardens are affected by virus disease, which may or may not have a serious effect on yield. It usually shows up as light and dark mottling of the leaves, which sometimes become streaked and highly coloured as they die down. Crowns infected by virus should be destroyed and care should be taken not to spread the disease to healthy plants by handling infected plants and then handling healthy ones. Washing of the hands will remove infection.

Shallots

The harvesting of shallots can be begun as soon as the bulbs are mature