

# SEEDS from Otago Central

TO COUNTERACT enemy practice of laying waste to the countryside, destroying crops, and either ruining or removing all seed able to be seized, seed shipments have followed allied invasion armies in all theatres of war. Quantities of seed, for instance, landed in North Africa were moved to Sicily, and, as progress was made, into Italy and gradually northward; thirty days after American troops first established themselves in the Solomons vegetable gardens had been sown—the men had begun to grow their own food. On all fronts, too, large quantities of seed for quick-growing crops have been needed for camouflage.

Much of the world's seed-supply has been blocked by war—beet-seed from Germany, cabbage-seed from Denmark, and Holland, cauliflower-seed from Holland, onion-seed from the Canary Islands, clover-seed from France and Hungary. In the early days of the war the position was made worse as the more important seed crops take two years to produce. Countries of the United Nations, where possible, had to expand seed-production hurriedly; stocks were pooled, and distributed where most needed—mostly to Great Britain and to Russia. Such cargoes have saved much shipping space; it is estimated that 1 lb. of seed (such as cabbage-seed) is the equivalent of 6,000 lb. of food.

To meet civilian needs, to supply all home and overseas forces stationed in New Zealand, to send large quantities of fresh, green vegetables to overseas troops in the Pacific, and to keep local dehydration plants working to capacity, this country had to increase extensively the acreage of ground under vegetable cultivation. "Victory" gardens, the establish-

ment of Government-controlled gardens, and closer co-operation among market-gardeners helped to meet the problem; in 1944 more than 26,000 acres were growing vegetables. Demand for seeds, of course, rose proportionately, but in spite of the use of greatly increased quantities New Zealand was still able to export—to Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—nearly 11,000,000 lb. (mostly pea-seed, but other vegetable varieties as well).

Moa Seed Farm, a few miles from Roxburgh, Otago Central, one of the largest properties producing vegetable and flower seeds in New Zealand, harvests every year between four and five tons of parsnip, beetroot, onion, and carrot seeds, as well as some garden peas and large quantities of sweet-pea seeds and tulip bulbs. Here in the summer are to be seen fields leaping with colour; rows on rows, their distance measuring into miles, of sweet peas high into the air, altogether between one hundred and fifty and two hundred varieties; blocks planted with parsnips standing up to 8 ft. high and looking, in their apparent abandon, as unlike parsnips as parsnips ever could look. Everywhere is colour—massed and lavish, but not garish. Two land girls (in wide hats) work there, and for the harvesting, girl students from the university. There are two draught horses, fine animals, drays, and quarried stone buildings, open gates and dusty paths and drives, farm implements are under the trees, round them pine-needles, blue-gum nuts, and green grass. Scent from the wild acres mixes with the smell (hospital-clean) of Australian gums. Over all vibrates that Otago Central sunshine; behind rise the hills.