

mature. This is not much help to the home gardener, except as a tip that he must try to find out all he can about varying rates of growth at different times of the year in his own garden. The moral: Keep a record of what you do and when you do it, and plan your crops according to the eccentricities of your garden, geographical location and climate.

Flourishing Crops

Resting again in your garden—this time on your hoe—and looking around with joy at your flourishing crops, you may feel at this point that there is some truth in Marvell's *Thoughts in a Garden*—that your soul could quite easily escape your body to jump sportively from cabbage to cabbage. Yet even as you watch you feel deeply suspicious of your vegetables. Will they grow up fat, hearty and phlegmatic, or temperamental and marked for an early grave? Temperamental vegetables, like temperamental people, are a product of either bad heredity or bad environment. Different strains of vegetables differ in their adaptation to conditions, so you should try to get strains that are known to do well in your district.

And as you choose for your district, so should you choose for the season. Poor hearting in lettuce, for instance, may be due to a poor strain of seed, but it could as easily result from planting a Winter variety in Summer. A similar complaint in cauliflowers is less easy to avoid, as there are many poor strains of seed about, and with this particularly temperamental vegetable you should try to get a variety of seed that's known to be successful in your district. Hollowness or pithiness in celery can be an inherited character and shouldn't be a problem if you use good seed—though poor growing conditions can cause hollowness of the outer stem. Again, parsley is sometimes hard to grow because the seed becomes sterile fairly quickly. Carrots are among vegetables that are fussy about where they live, and in some areas—Wellington and Sumner, for example—it's difficult to grow the standard market varieties. If they're a problem for you, you should try the larger, coarser varieties—Holmes Improved, Taranaki Strong Top, Top Weight, Egmont Gold, and Sweet-crop.

The potato-minded gardener (this year, everyone) sometimes wants to know how much he should earth up potatoes. If soil moisture is adequate (Westland), or more than adequate (Milford Sound and Auckland), earthing up helps drainage and helps to keep the tubers free from spores of the late blight fungus and away from the potato tuber moth—which isn't, by the way, even a distant relation of the sugar plum fairy. In dry areas (this year, none) slightly deeper planting and less earthing up will give the crops a better chance of standing up to lack of moisture. And however much or little you earth up, you must see to it that

the root systems of the plants are not injured.

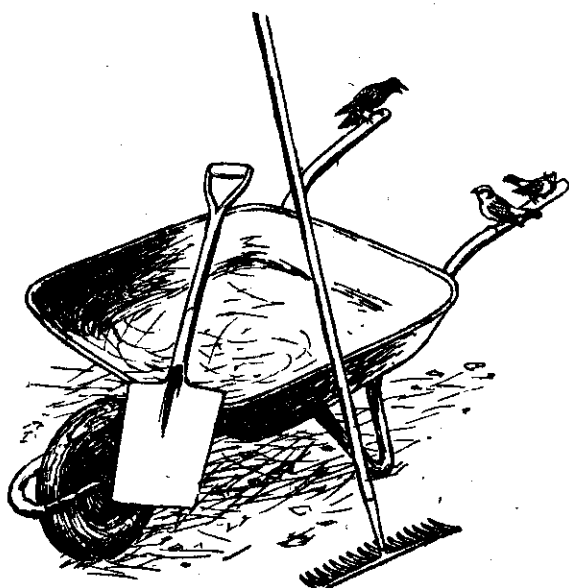
In the north, warm, humid conditions encourage fungus diseases such as late blight of potatoes and tomatoes, and regular spraying is needed to combat them. In general, wet weather favours fungus diseases attacking the leaves, as in leaf spot of celery, while dry, hot weather favours such insect pests as cabbage aphid and white butterfly. The need to spray thus depends largely on season and situation. In general, it's wise to spray to prevent fungus diseases, and to control insect pests as soon as they're noticed. For white butterfly spray with D.D.T., Lindane or Malathion at recommended strength—see the label around the packet.

Flowers and Shrubs

The reluctant gardener, interested only in the vegetable bill, often leaves the flowers to the frau with an injunction to keep to her own patch of the epithet garden. Here, to end, are a few notes for her. To have a supply of cut flowers throughout the year, grow plants that have a long flowering season, not just one short, brilliant display. Many herbaceous perennials and flowering shrubs are suitable, and a few bulbous plants. Shrubs would include Camellia, Daphne, Fuchsia, Hydrangeas, Marguerite Daisy and garden varieties of Manuka. Berried shrubs like Cotoneaster are also useful.

Perennials which can be grown in the same place for two or three years include Carnation, Delphinium, Hellebore, Michaelmas Daisy and Scabious. Dahlias are handy, also Narcissus, planted in one corner or near a hedge. Climbing roses will provide more flowers than bush roses, and can be trained on a trellis attached to a wall or fence. Of the seedling or bedding plants, Iceland Poppy, Marigold and Zinnia all provide a succession of flowers.

When, at the start of this Plain Guide, we tried to find out the most common causes of Gardener's Headache, we did hear of some with which, we feel, our readers might like to help. How can I prevent pigeons squashing Geraniums in my window-boxes? How can I avoid losing the little round cacti that look so cute on the mantelpiece? How can I cure myself of a morbid fear of worms? We don't know, so—over to you.



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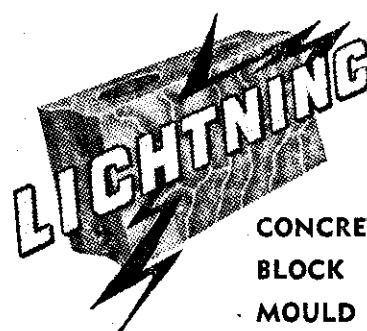
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