

ON THE LAND

IMMATURE POTATOES FOR SEED.

Much has been written of recent years with regard to the value of immature potatoes as "seed" (says *Farm, Field, and Fireside*). Many growers make a practice of raising the crop while it is still green, but when this is done care must be taken in storing. Mistakes are frequently made in raising the tubers too early, and when the skins are very tender: this must be avoided, otherwise shrinkage will take place, accompanied by a loss of vitality.

Potatoes which are allowed to lie in the ground until they become dead ripe and the skins thick and corky are of little value as "seed," largely on account of the over-development of starch. With the tender skins care is needed in the digging and storing. Especial care should be given in the digging, but when ridges are not very hard they ought to come out without bruising. Doubtless many potatoes bruise from careless work at the pits, and are not only mechanically injured, but are rendered more susceptible to pit diseases.

ELECTRIFIED SEEDS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

During the 1918 harvest in Great Britain some remarkable results were obtained from "electrified seeds." Mr. H. E. Fry, an electrical engineer in Dorset, England, has developed a process of stimulating seeds so that they yield healthier and more prolific crops. The process consists of soaking the seeds in a solution of common salt, sending a current of electricity through the solution, and subsequently drying the seeds. Trials have been made with electrified wheat, barley, and oats in comparison with non-electrified seeds from the same sack, and sown on adjoining ground. The electrified seeds threw up more straws, which were so much stronger than the normal that they withstood storms which laid the non-electrified harvest low. The gain in yield per acre varied in different parts of the country from five to nearly twenty bushels per acre for oats, and from about five to seven bushels for wheat. Barley showed an increase of sixteen bushels in another recorded case. Twenty-seven farmers in South Devon realised an averaged gain per acre of £4 13s. after deducting the cost of treatment, which is only a few shillings per sack. Thus the latest British contribution to the promising science of electroculture is being investigated by the sub-committee of the Board of Agriculture of Great Britain, which is making a scientific study of the influence of electricity on plant life.

EXTRACTING BEESWAX.

Where wax is to be made into foundation no special care is needed as regards sorting the comb, but where first-quality wax is required for exhibition or other purposes careful grading of the raw material is essential. Prime qualifications of the best wax are color and aroma, and both of these are very easily impaired unless much care be taken. The color aimed at is either a lemon or golden yellow, clear and bright, and this is got from new or fairly new comb and capping. Observe that wax becomes of a deeper and less bright color with each remelting, so that to obtain the best results it should be heated once only, or twice at

most. To retain the aroma steam heat should be used, as dry heat has a very damaging effect in this direction.

CHAFF.

From now on until the spring the stock must necessarily be in the main hand fed, and one of the foods now much depended upon is chaff (says a writer in *Farm, Field, and Fireside*). Upon small holdings the hand chaff-engine may be used, but speaking generally chaffing is done by power—the oil-engine frequently—and it is probable that those who at the present chaff by hand would do well to instal power, which is useful in many ways besides chaff-cutting. Any long fodder can be chaffed, and chaff can be fed to most stock.

Chaff is useful in that it can be mixed with various other foods—pulp, for instance—but it should at all times be remembered that chaffing of itself does not improve the material chaffed, it only cuts it up into short lengths without in any way affecting the quality. In the case of poor hay or straw, however, chaffing makes it possible to make more palatable by mixing with meals, pulp, etc., and so provides palatable, filling food when otherwise the stock would eat it but gingerly; but, apart from this, chaff from good quality material is the sort to go in for.

In feeding chaff it should always be remembered that some long fodder should always be provided in addition, it not being policy to chaff everything. When chaff is fed it should be fed regularly, not by fits and starts.

POTATO "BUTTER."

The British Ministry of Food stated some time ago that in view of the shortage of butter they have been carrying out experiments in order to find suitable and economical ways of eking out the available butter and margarine supplies by mixing in other food substances, and so producing cheap and palatable substitutes. These experiments have shown that an excellent "potato butter," costing only about 5d per lb (or less if margarine is used) can easily be made in any household without special knowledge or apparatus in accordance with the following recipe:—

Peel the potatoes and boil (or steam) until they fall to pieces and become flowery. Rub through a fine sieve into a large basin which has been previously warmed. To every 14oz of mashed potato add 2oz of butter or margarine and one teaspoonful of salt. Stir thoroughly with the back of a wooden spoon until the whole is quite smooth. The butter may then be made up into pounds or half-pounds and kept in a cool place.

The potato butter may be improved in appearance by the addition of a few drops of butter-coloring, and if it is to be kept for more than a few days butter preservative, of which there are several forms on the market, should be used. The amount should be in accordance with the printed instructions on the packet for use in butter. Both the coloring and the preservative should be well mixed into the potato at the same time as the butter and salt. If these directions are carefully followed potato butter will keep for a considerable time, though it may be found that the surface is apt to become dry, but this can be obviated by keeping it wrapped in grease-proof paper.



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