

THE GLEANER.

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THE GLEANER.

Agricultural Journal.

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A simple means of preventing the failure of the Potato Crop.—It will be allowed by all practical farmers, that the Potato sets, when cut, discharge a large quantity of fluid or juice, the loss of which has a tendency to weaken the germinating powers of the sets, and at the same time exposes them to undergo fermentation in the heap. In 1833, we had our seed potatoes from the parish of Pennycuik. When cut, I desired the women to riddle a shovel full of lime on every basketful of new-cut sets. They were turned over and over again, until the lime was taken up by the sets, when they were put into a heap for two or three weeks.

The hot lime had the effect of stopping the flow of the juice, and of encrusting a strong skin on the sets. This crust, on the one hand, preserves the sap being drawn away from the sets in a dry season, among dry soil, and of repelling wet in a wet season, among damp earth. The sorts of potatoes experimented on were dons and blues. The land was in a fine moist state, well worked, and the dung well made; and they were ridged in the last week of April. There was a regular braird, and the crop was fine. In 1834, our seed potatoes, dons and blues, were obtained from the same parish, and treated in the same manner. The ground was very dry, the dung dry, and the heat great when they were planted; so dry, that the dust was flying from the strong clay soil, when drilled up. The braird was regular, and the crop fine, with the exception of 11 drills, which were planted without the sets being limed, and which proved a complete failure, and of some ornobles, which had also failed. In 1835 we did not change our seed potato. One half of the land was dunged on the stubble in October, and the other half in spring, part of it on strong clay, and part on light loam. The dung was very dry in spring, the land not well worked, and the planting finished in May. The braird was regular, and the crop fine, although there was a general failure throughout the country. In 1836 the seed potato was obtained from the neighbours of Edinburgh. They were bluffs, and treated in the same manner as described above. The land, a fine old grass, and full of wire worm. The dung was very dry, the land well worked, the braird regular, and the crop fine.—There was none planted without the lime this season. In 1837 the seed potato was obtained from Leader Water, dons and blues. A fine, light loam was well worked, and dunged with well made dung. The crop was planted the second week in May, and proved a fine one. No one planted without the lime this season. In 1838 the seed potatoes came from Gala Water, dons and blues, which were planted in the last week of May, on land not well worked, and

the dung very dry; but the braird was without a blank, and the crop fine. Two bolls of seed potatoes from Peeblesshire were tried without lime, and proved a complete failure, the insects having eaten the sets to a shell. These were planted in the first week of May. In 1839 the seed potatoes were from Gala Water, bluffs, and which were planted in the last week of April, in strong clay, not well worked, and the dung very dry; but the braird was very regular, and the crop very fine. There were none planted without lime this season. In 1840 again, the seed potatoes were from Gala Water, dons and blues, which were planted in the end of May, in a light loam, full of wire worm, but well worked, and the dung dry. The crop was fine. A few drills were tried, as an experiment, without the lime, and they were so complete a failure that they were ploughed down.

From the Gardener's Chronicle.

Experiments in Potato Culture.—“Mr Cuthbert Johnson says, in his Cottage Farmer's Assistant, p. 87, that the potato delights in rich soil, and in waste vegetable manure, such as sea weed, chopped Fern, &c., lime is injurious to it. On the contrary, Martin Doyle says, *Hints*, p. 48, ‘Ground which has been recently limed, even in a very light degree, will, with the addition of dung, produce the largest and best crops of Potatoes.’ Between Dr Doyle and Johnson, I am fairly puzzled.”

Thus writes a correspondent, who describes himself as a great friend of the Potato; and who is not? We were ourselves aware of the statement that lime is injurious to potatoes, and therefore have made it the subject of a little experiment, which we beg leave to mention.

A small piece of ground, on the London clay, some years since a kitchen garden ‘run out,’ was laid down with grass for three years. It was so low as to be little better than a morass in winter; and in wet summers, owing to the adhesiveness of the soil, was almost impassable. Last autumn, it was drained by means of two V ditches, half filled with bushes and directed into another ditch. By this means, full 18 inches of the soil were completely freed of water. During the winter, it was abundantly dressed with lime rubbish, which in February last was incorporated with the soil by careful trenching—the old turf being turned down by the same operation. In April it was planted with the Breadfruit Potato; and the crop which has just been taken up proves of excellent quality, and abundant. From an area of rather more than 26 rods, 98 bushels of potatoes, of 56 lbs. to the bushel, or 2 tons 9 cwt. have been obtained; this is at the rate of something more than 15 tons an acre. But as the ground was partially overspread by trees, and in one place, for the space of three or four rods, had been an old walk, broken up in the trenching, and of very bad quality, it may be assumed that, in the absence of those disadvantages, the crop and quality of the potatoes on this limed ground would have been even better. It was not however, with lime alone

that this piece of ground was prepared; advantage was taken of the opportunity to try the effect of certain other agents upon the growth of the potato. Four rods were measured off on an average part of the crop, and taken as a *standard of comparison*; they yielded 11 1-2 bushels of picked potatoes and 2 bushels of small, or 13 1-2 tons per acre. The same space of ground was treated with *nitrate of soda*, at the rate of 1 lb. per rod, applied shortly after the sets had begun to sprout; from this were gathered 16 bushels of large, and 2 bushels of small, or 11 tons an acre. Another four rods received a dressing of *muriate of lime* at the same time and in the same proportion as the nitrate; and the yield was 16 bushels of large and 2 1-2 bushels of small, or 18 tons and a half per acre. This amount of produce is very considerable, 12 tons being regarded as a heavy crop near London. An attempt was also made to ascertain the effect of what is called *salt cake*, a cheap and very impure kind of sulphate of soda, containing some free sulphuric acid. From four rods of ground dressed with this substance, at the rate of 1 lb. to a rod, just 12 bushels of large Potatoes were obtained, and 2 1-4 of small, or 14 1-2 tons per acre. The salt cake, therefore, raised the crop above that in the common soil, to the extent of a ton an acre; but this result was less satisfactory than the others, because the ground treated with salt cake was the poorest part of the field.

If these results are to be trusted, a dressing of nitrate of soda, worth forty shillings an acre, increased the produce 5 tons; while muriate of lime, worth a smaller sum, augmented the crop rather more. Although they will require verification in a future season, they prove this pretty clearly, that lime is advantageous to a Potato crop, and not injurious.

We may remark, in conclusion, that the land where these potatoes were grown was sadly infested with slugs; but that the crop was much less attacked where the nitrate of soda was used than elsewhere.

Many of our readers must by this time have ascertained the result of their own experiments on Potatoes; and we trust they will, in return for this piece of information favour us with the particulars of them.

Spirit of Tar and Carrots.—One of your correspondents recommends spirit of tar for Carrots. Last year I had a bed of sixty yards long, I tried as an experiment about five yards, sowing the spirits of tar mixed with dry earth, at the same time as the seed. From the piece sown with spirits of tar, I had a good crop of clean carrots, whereas the piece sown without them was covered with and almost eaten up by the fly.—A Young Cottager.

Correspondence of the Gardener's Chronicle.

On Planting and Manuring Potatoes.—A number of articles on the culture of potatoes having appeared in the Chronicle, some may think that the subject is exhausted; but I have not seen any reference to a

mode of planting that I think a very good one, at least, I have often planted them in that way, and with the greatest success. In the early part of the winter, the sooner the better, the ground must be dunged and ridged in the usual way, making the ridges the same width as the potato-drills are meant to be. In this state the ground must lie until spring. At the proper season of planting, deepen the space between the ridges a little, making a drill with the hoe, and in this plant the Potatoes. They must be covered with the hoe by drawing from each side of the ridge as much of the fine soil, mellowed by the winter frost, as is sufficient to cover them properly; the ridges may not be completely levelled, but what remains is peculiarly useful when they come to be earthened up. I need scarcely mention the great advantage of planting in a soil well prepared, and although Potatoes will grow and may grow, and may grow in a soil not so well wrought, yet they will grow better when it is well dug and pulverised, and no way of preparing the ground is more easily or sooner done than that which I have described, and as to planting, you may plant much more in a given time than by any other method. It is probably well known to many, although I do not recollect of ever seeing it noticed, that *woollen rags are an excellent manure for Potatoes*. The rags are cut up in small pieces, and put under the sets at planting, and effects produced is wonderful; it is a long time since I planted any in this way, nor did I ever at any time make any particular observation as to the quantity produced; but this I can say that they far exceeded those that were manured in the usual way. The time for planting may be over in the south, but is not in the north; nor is it too late in any quarter to try the experiment, if any of the numerous readers of the Chronicle choose to do so. It might heighten the effects if the rags were dipped in or saturated with, ammonical gas liquor, at least it might be interesting to make the trial.

RECIPES

Blue for Cotton and Linen.—A part indigo, 2 part copperas, and 2 lime, (fresh burnt, and of the best quality.) Grind the Indigo fine with water, then mix all in cold water; stir it for three hours, then let it stand two days. Dip the yarn in the dye, then wring it; repeat this three or four times, and hang it out to dry; it will be a light blue. If this work is repeated the two following mornings it will be a dark blue, a very bright colour, but not the most durable. Much depends on the goodness of the lime, which should be white and very strong.—Colonial Farmer.

To Dye Wool Blue.—Put into the copper 40 gallons water 9 lb potash, 6 lb bran, and 3-4 lb madder—make it boil. Grind 6 lb of indigo fine in water, and put it in and stir carefully. Cover the fat, place a slow fire about it, stir it every twelve hours. In 48 hours, or when it is green with coppery flakes, or blue