VI

THE KINDS OF VEGETABLES TO GROW

A NUMBER of factors have to be taken into consideration before deciding just which kinds of vegetables to plant in your garden. Some of these factors are, the nature of the soil, the size of the garden, the food value of the crop and the ease with which it may be stored for winter use.

Sometimes it is possible to adapt the soil to the crop, but usually it is easier to adapt the crop to the soil. A rich loam will support practically all of the vegetables and produce good crops. A thin, sandy soil which has not been properly fertilized is only suitable for such crops as bush beans, beets, Swiss chard, tomato, and New Zealand spinach. Of course other crops can be grown on such a soil, but not very satisfactorily. Potatoes like a sandy soil, but it must be well fertilized.
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Heavy clay soils will grow cabbage, kale, corn, parsley, parsnips (if the soil is deep), peas and rhubarb.

If the soil is shallow it is not advisable to attempt any of the root crops that make a long root. In this category belong the long beets, parsnips, and salsify.

That person is unwise who attempts to grow potatoes, corn, and cabbage in a very restricted area. These crops need plenty of room in which to develop, and when one has only a city back yard, or a small plot, it is better to concentrate on the smaller-growing vegetables. The best crops to grow in the city back yard are bush beans, parsley, radish, beets, Swiss chard, and tomato. Peas would probably succeed if it were not for the sparrows which pick off the leaves as fast as they are produced.

One is strictly limited if the available ground is shaded. All the vegetables need sun for the greater part of the day. Those kinds which are grown for their leaves are more satisfactory in a shady garden, and if the soil conditions are favorable the following may be tried: beet, cabbage, lettuce, and Swiss chard. Even these need a few hours of sunshine.

Those who are interested in dietetics may
wish to choose their vegetables on the basis of their food value. In terms of the calorie, the unit of energy as applied to food, we find that 1 ounce of dried beans (seeds) and 8 ounces of string-beans are required to produce a hundred calories. Of green corn 3.2 ounces are needed; of potatoes, 5.3 ounces; of onions, 8 ounces; of beets, 9.6 ounces; of cabbage, 13.3 ounces; and at the bottom of the list comes celery, of which 23.7 ounces are required to produce a hundred calories. It is misleading, however, to take a list of vegetables with their caloric values and decide, that because 6.4 ounces of peas contain one hundred calories, while it is necessary to have 10.1 ounces of carrots to produce the same amount, nothing but peas shall be grown in the garden. The proper basis on which to make a decision along these lines is on the amount of calories that can be obtained from each square yard of ground. A considerable area is necessary for the production of a pound of peas, while a similar weight of carrots could be produced in a much smaller space. Furthermore, it must be remembered that the human system demands a certain amount of bulky foods, and these are supplied by vegetables low in caloric values.
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There are a number of crops that can easily be preserved or stored for winter use, and this should be considered when deciding what kinds of vegetables to grow. String-beans are easily preserved by pickling them in brine, and there is no difficulty whatever in caring for the dry-shell beans when they are not infested with weevils. All of the root crops—carrots, beets, parsnips—can be easily stored in sand or soil in the cellar, and potatoes are one of the easiest of crops to care for. Onions can readily be carried over into the winter if a cool, airy room is available. All of the crops just mentioned are fairly high in food value.