

SWEET POTATO INDUSTRY

It Must Be Developed With Caution If at All.

HOW TO GROW AND HOW TO SAVE

Very Little Difficulty About Raising Fine Crops of Superior Potatoes; But the Question of Marketing is Quite Serious.

Realizing that danger to the future success of the sweet potato industry in South Carolina may result from a too rapid expansion along other than conservative lines, a committee representing several of those agencies interested in the proper development of the industry was called by Mr. W. W. Long, director of the Extension Service of Clemson Agricultural college, to meet in Columbia on March 7, 1922.

Existing conditions were discussed in detail, and it was decided that a definite policy for the safe progress of the industry in the state would prove beneficial both to experienced growers and to prospective growers.

The committee urges earnest and careful consideration of the recommendations shown below, which were formulated with the idea that the sweet potato crop can be made a profitable or money crop, not supplanting cotton, but in a measure supplementing it.

In the past, sweet potatoes in South Carolina have been considered a crop to be stored largely in earthen banks, and marketed mainly during the fall and early winter months. Indications at present are that the crop may be profitably divided into two parts:

First: Potatoes grown for early market, to be sold in July, August and September.

Second: The main crop, to be stored in curing houses, and marketed during the winter and spring months. This part of the crop is to be considered first in this policy.

Soil selection, pure seed free from disease, preparation of soil, fertilization, careful fitting and planting and cultivating are the essentials of success in the growing of sweet potatoes for both early and late markets.

Soil.—The sweet potato adapts itself to a great diversity of soils, but thrives best on well drained, sandy or light clay-loam soil with a clay sub-soil. Growers should avoid black soil, soil that is infested with wilt and root-knot, soil that is in a very high state of cultivation, and soil that is not well drained. Regardless of the physical condition of the soil, this crop must be rotated each year.

Preparation.—Soil should be thoroughly and deeply prepared by turning to a depth of six or eight inches followed by cross-disking. Crooked and irregular roots result from shallow cultivation of the soil.

Fertilizers.—Kind.—As a rule 8-3-3 is recommended for clayey soils and 8-3-6 for the lighter and poorer soils. However, the growers should be governed to a large extent by local conditions. The use of stable manure is cautiously recommended, since if not properly applied it results in disease. Nitrate of soda and sulphate of ammonia if used should be used with caution.

Amount.—Four hundred to six hundred pounds per acre of the proper formula should be used on soils which produce a bale of cotton per acre. Six hundred to twelve hundred pounds per acre should be used on the lighter and poorer soils.

How Applied.—Fertilizer should be applied in the drill and mixed well with the soil. If barnyard manure is used, it should be applied broadcast and preferably given to the preceding crop.

Seed and Plant Growing. Variety.—Porto Rico and Nancy Hall are recommended. Growers should adopt the variety most popular in the particular community and should grow one variety exclusively.

Seed Selection.—Healthy, smooth medium-sized potatoes should be obtained from reliable sources. It is well to split the ends of the potato and examine for rot and if the ends are blackened, not to use for seed. All potatoes with nearly round, sunken black spots on the surface or with rotten ends should be thrown out. Grow your own plants or buy from a reliable source.

Seed Treatment.—Corrosive sublimate or formaldehyde (commercial 40 per cent.) is recommended with the following directions for treatment:

1. Dip potatoes for five to eight minutes in a solution of formaldehyde (commercial 40 per cent.) made by diluting one quart in 50 gallons of water.

2. Dissolve one ounce of corrosive sublimate in eight gallons of warm water and dip the potatoes for ten minutes. (Use wooden containers). Handle this solution cautiously as it is deadly poison.

Bedding.—Potatoes should be bedded on well drained land that is free from disease. The use of clean sand for bedding instead of soil will reduce disease.

Fitting the Soil and Setting the Plants. Planting.—Beds of medium height, depending upon drainage and soil type, are recommended.

Distance.—Rows should be three and a half to four feet and plants set approximately 12 to 14 inches in the drill, depending on the strength of the land. The closer spacing in the drill tends to give a higher percentage of marketable potatoes.

Vine cuttings, when planted sufficiently early, are most desirable for growing the storage crop.

Cultivation. To correct the packed condition of the soil brought about by the transplanting process, the water furrows should be narrowed or otherwise stirred immediately after the plants are set.

Frequent shallow cultivation should be practiced until the vines have covered the ground. The Orangeburg sweep or the heel low and shovel is very effective in cultivating this crop.

Harvesting and Grading. Harvesting should be before frost to insure successful storage and should be done with implements giving the least number of cuts and bruises. Potatoes should be handled not carelessly or roughly, but as eggs. One should not harvest more potatoes than can be stored on the same day.

Grading.—Field grading into standard grades is absolutely essential. No. 1's and 2's should be placed in separate crates in the field, and the different grades should be segregated in storage house section or room if necessary to store in the same compartment, so that one grade will not be disturbed when the other is removed for market. Potatoes should be stored and cured in crates in which they will be marketed later, and tops of all crates left off until ready for shipment.

Storage House. The committee recommends the government standard type house designed for crate storage. (Modifications of this type may or may not be successful).

Farm Storage.—The farm storage house (500 to 1,000 bushels capacity) has a distinct place in the development of the sweet potato industry in taking care of the farm supply of sweet potatoes.

Commercial Houses.—These houses exceeding 1,000 bushel capacity and limited by present needs to 15,000 bushels must be located on a railway side-track and on well-drained land. Large commercial houses should be built in 2,500 to 3,000 bushel units or rooms. Storage houses may be built with over-size doors in order to permit of their use for the storage of such crops as hay, grain, tobacco and cotton.

Crates. The standard veneer crate twelve by twelve by eighteen and three-quarter inches inside measurements has been adopted by the South Carolina Sweet Potato association.

Marketing. The committee feels that best results will be obtained if the local house manager controls the marketing of all potatoes stored in a commercial house for sale. The South Carolina Sweet Potato association is recommended to the local storage house manager as the agency through which to sell. It is recommended that the South Carolina Sweet Potato association deal directly with the managers of the several storage houses and that the managers of the individual houses deal directly under contract with the growers.

Sweet potato storage is no longer an experiment, but a decided success. It not only saves most of the potatoes processed, but improves their eating quality. After removal from the storage house these potatoes can be transported in good condition for long distances, if necessary. Experimental shipments have been made to London, England, and to Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands.

Green Potatoes. Where climate and soil conditions warrant, there is an opportunity to grow early sweet potatoes for shipment grown in July and up to August 10. But it must be remembered that a large volume of early sweet potatoes is shipped from North Carolina and Virginia, commencing about the first of August, and that on shipments to the eastern markets South Carolina will have to compete with the above mentioned sections in August shipments.

The majority of markets prefer to buy green sweet potatoes packed in standard barrels. The other containers are the bushel hamper and the standard crate.

A minimum car is considered to be around 500 bushels or 150 barrels. The shipper should be certain that he has a carload of potatoes before attempting a carlot shipment.

A Word of Warning. The sweet potato industry, we believe, has come to South Carolina to stay and is destined to fill properly a part of the gap in our agricultural system. However, the degree of success of this crop depends absolutely on the quality of the product and its distribution. The first is altogether in the hands of the grower, the second is up to the marketing agency.

In conclusion, this committee wishes to sound a word of warning. While we believe the ultimate outcome of the sweet potato business will be gratifying, yet we feel that there is danger of a rapid development of this industry on an unsound basis, which may cause a tremendous setback to its proper development. The developed market for the sweet potato is not unlimited and a too rapid development of the production end may overbalance the demand and prove a deathblow to the industry in many localities. We believe that the expansion of the industry along conservative lines only (with the ultimate idea of conserving a larger part of the crop now produced) instead of increasing the acreage, will result in giving to the farmer a new money crop and to the consumer a new dependable nutritious food.

Signed, T. B. Young, Chairman, Geo. P. Hoffmann, F. L. Harkey, F. H. Lewis, R. Farmer, S. P. Coker, G. A. Cardwell, J. N. McBride.

HER EYES CAUSED AUTO MISHAP.



Miss Laura Jaker, who is suing Jay J. Livingston, wealthy accountant, for \$50,000. Miss Jaker was injured when an automobile, driven by Livingston, in which she was riding, met with an accident. When asked where the defendant was looking when the smash up occurred Miss Jaker said, "Right into my eyes."

Justice Cochran Decides They May Participate in Club-meetings. Women of South Carolina may participate in the Democratic club meetings and elections this month, according to an opinion rendered for the League of Women Voters Tuesday by Associate Justice Cochran, of the Supreme court. The opinion was prepared for Mrs. C. Y. Reamer, chairman of the legislative committee of the league. The opinion of Justice Cochran holds that the women may sit in the Democratic club meetings.

New England capital is looking for investment in the textile industry it will unquestionably come south.

that they can participate in the election of delegates to the county conventions, and that they can be elected as delegates. He also holds that the women must enroll on the club books if they are to vote in the primaries. The question regarding the women participating in the Democratic reorganization came from Beaufort, where it had been ruled that the women could not vote in the Democratic club meetings. —The millennium will be here some time after the trigger finger becomes as useless as the appendix. —If Ananias had lived it would be rather amusing to hear him talk about his golf score.

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