

Extracts

Why India Starves and the Remedy.

Starvation of the soil is the root cause of our own starvation. Mother Earth is truly a living being and if we do not nourish her she cannot nourish us. Man must have noticed the invigorating effect on the earth of the dung and urine of his cattle and how the sweepings of his cow-sheds after they had rotted gave out a smell like rich vigur soil. In this way he must have arrived at the preparation and use of farm yard manure, the roughers and oldest form of "compost". In some countries this process developed naturally through age long intelligent practices of the peasantry into a highly advanced method of composting as in China where the cultivator has developed a record yield per acre. In others it remained at or reverted to the primitive stages as in the Indian villages to-day. With the advent of modern science and méchanisation of Agriculture came the introduction of artificial manures especially in the East. Gradually livestock got reduced and the countries which started the modern methods began to recognise their dangers and the scientists are now recommending compost manure as the best of all nourishments for the soil. It contains something of everything that is present in the artificial manures and in addition it is full of rich moisture retaining body building *humus*.

What exactly is this compost? It is simply rubbish mixed thoroughly with either cattle dung and cattle urine or with human excreta. It is easy to make, the necessary ingredients are all present in our village, the villagers ordinary tools are sufficient for the job and the preparation needs no special technical knowledge. Once the method of preparation has been explained, any peasant can prepare it successfully for himself. The only real obstacles in the way are lack of knowledge, indifference and laziness. Once the arch enemies our progress are mastered we shall get over food shortage, high prices, insanitation and ill-health.

Is not such an achievement worth our fullest endeavour? (Extract from "Why India Starves" by Srimathi Miraben).

Prize for groundnut hand Decorticator. A prize of Rs. 2,000 will be awarded by the Indian Oilseeds Committee to any person or body who designs the best method of groundnut hand decorticator and demonstrates its working to the satisfaction of the Indian Oilseeds Committee or competent body to be appointed by it. Entries accompanied with diagrams showing details of the machine should be submitted to the Secretary, Indian Oilseeds Committee, Ministry of Agriculture, New Delhi, so as to reach him not later than October 31, 1949. Competitors should be prepared to demonstrate the working of the machine at such place and time as directed by the Committee.

The groundnut hand decorticator should fulfill the following conditions :—

1. The hand decorticator should as far as possible, be made of material easily available in the villages. It should preferably be made of wood and should have as little iron part as possible.
2. The construction should be simple enough so that repairs and spare parts can be provided in the villages by the village carpenter or the village blacksmith.
3. The grates or sieves used in the machine should be adjustable to enable proper decortication of groundnut pods of different varieties and sizes.
4. The turnover and cost of decortication should compare favourably to those of power decorticators.
5. The proportion of split and broken kernels, 'nooks' and unshelled pods in the decorticated produce should be as little as possible.

6. The c
Rs. 100. (India

Pruning
can be used in
ripen on the pl
indoors. Since
plants should
in North East
fruit in the les
inch by two in
and used. T
inches and th
driven soon a
grows. Pru
lateral bran
examined at
This tends t
After three
off or cut fi
retained.
air to speed
production
pruning.

Imp
potatoes t

(1)

(2)

It
growing
diseased
reason
consequ
in stor
damag
possibl
under
advant
has a
relati
of sur
a mir

6. The cost of the hand decorticator should be reasonable and should not exceed Rs. 100. (Indian Farming—January 1949.)

Pruning Tomatoes. Tomato is one of the most valuable of the vegetables as it can be used in many forms and is an important source of vitamins. Tomatoes which ripen on the plant contain higher vitamin contents than those picked green and ripened indoors. Since ripened fruit is desirable in as large quantities as possible, the tomato plants should be pruned to a single stem and tied to stakes. This practice has proved best in North Eastern Saskatchewan (in Canada) in the production of early, larger and cleaner fruit in the less disease, injury and more convenient harvesting. Stakes of wood one inch by two inches and five feet long are satisfactory—small stakes may be cut from the bush and used. The stakes are driven a few inches from each plant to a depth of 10 to 12 inches and the plants are tied to them. The injury to the plant is less if the stakes are driven soon after planting. Tying the plant to the stake should be continued as the plant grows. Pruning the plants to one stem consists of cutting or pinching out all side or lateral branches as soon as they appear. During the growing period the plants should be examined at least once in a week and all the side and lateral branches should be removed. This tends to throw all the vigour of the plant into the formation and production of fruit. After three or four flower clusters have set fruits, the top of the plant should be pinched off or cut first below the next clusters of flowers that appears above the clusters to be retained. Any leaf overhanging a cluster of fruits may also be removed to allow sun and air to speed the development and ripening of the fruit. This practice has resulted in early production with larger fruits and heavier yield. Bush types are not adapted to staking and pruning.

(Extract from Indian Farming—November 1947).

Improved Production of Potatoes. In order to effect improved production of potatoes two points must be borne in mind.

- (1) Growing of good varieties.
- (2) Maintaining of the health of the crop.

It is of paramount importance to keep the crop free from disease. The plants while growing on the field are regularly inspected, rogues are culled to keep up the purity and diseased plants are removed from the field to prevent further continuation. For the same reason potatoes intended for seeds are lifted immature. Another method of great consequence for the production of seed potatoes in the Netherlands is keeping the tubers in stores mainly built of glass. The advantages resulting from this method are: No damage by pest, no fumentation, negligible amount of rotting and continuous control is possible. The seeds can be planted after sprouting. Short strong sprouts are developed under exposure to-day-light. Planting of sprouted sets results in regular germination, an advantage when examining the crop for the detection of diseased plants. (The Netherlands has a fairly mild marine climate with wild winters and cool summers, prevailing high relation humidity of the air, large amount of cloudiness (0.6—0.7) and little sunshine (31% of sunny days). The average temperature is 10°C with a maximum of 19°C in July and a minimum of 2°C in January. The average rainfall is about 700 mms. per year.)

(Extract from Dutch Agriculture—'Facts')

