

Agricultural.

Improvement of Potatoes.

An article in the Revue Horticole translated, and published in the Farmer (Eng.) contains some points worthy of attention by our American farmers, as the same principles which govern the growth of this tuber in Europe are also potent here. When we want to regenerate any particular kind of potato, or still more, to prevent its degeneration, it is of the first importance to make a judicious selection of parent plants. Several means may be adopted to this end. For example, the choice of the largest possible tubers which represent well the marked features of the variety, since the too frequent selecting of small tubers tends to deterioration. Another plan is to choose the seed, when digging, of the crop, from the well furnished roots, and select the tubers which are most typical of the special variety under treatment. The shape of the tuber need not be too much considered. Some people imagine that tubers which differ from the usual shape of the kind to which they belong, are of necessity degenerate specimens, but this is an error. Tubers may be not exactly of the shape characteristic of the variety, and yet produce well-shaped potatoes in the following year. As a rule the shape of various kinds of potatoes differ according to the nature of the soil in which they are cultivated. For example, it is generally supposed that the "Marjolin" ought to be long and narrow; nevertheless, some light sandy soils produced it in a swollen, and sometimes even rounded form, though it turns out long and narrow if grown in stiff soil. It is general physical fact, common to almost all plants, and specially marked in the case of the potato, that if they are planted early every year, their precocity increases, while by reversing the cause of action the contrary effect is produced, and they tend to become later in attaining full growth. The same result appears if we plant successively in a cold soil. In this case they become later in arriving at maturity, while the contrary happens if we select warm ground. Again it is almost certain that if we take the first buds that are developed on a potato for planting, the crop will be earlier than if we planted with the second buds, or still more with those of a third germination. It results from all this, that amongst the various precautions to be taken in attempting to maintain or even improve any variety of potato, a judicious choice of tubers for planting is of especial importance. The employment of seeds properly so called, might also perhaps be resorted to, sometimes advantageously. But how often we see, not only before we get good crops, and good yield, but even after that, notwithstanding the uncertainty, this method should not be neglected. It is generally believed that certain kinds of potatoes, such as the "Marjolin," neither flower nor run to seed. This is again an error. All potatoes will flower and yield seed when they are very strongly manured and are in a condition of exuberant vegetation; but it is none the less true that there are some varieties whose natural strength leads them to flower and seed more freely than others.

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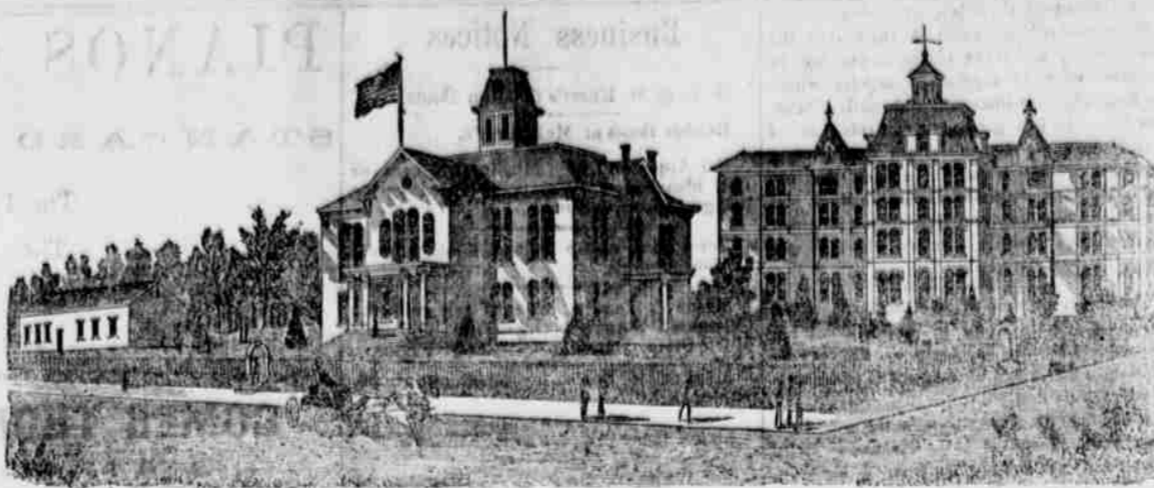
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