

# Department of Agriculture Urges Planting of City Gardens

Special Correspondence  
WASHINGTON, D. C., 1918.

The office of pomological and horticultural investigation of the Department of Agriculture is industriously sending out information relative to war gardens for the United States. Prof. L. C. Corbett is in charge of this office. In co-operation with this particular branch of agricultural work is the states' relation service, which has agents to apply the information given out. They promulgate their work and its aims through state, district and county leaders, chambers of commerce, boy and girl scouts, school teachers and others.

The Department of Agriculture has estimated that of the 20,000,000 families in this country a third will probably have gardens, and it is the department's wish to serve this third effectively. In reviewing the gardens of last year it is believed that the failures were comparatively few, but the department is determined that efficiency shall be promoted in the future, even though the number of gardens is increased, the number of failures will be in proportion, considerably reduced.

In order to insure more reliable reports than were obtainable for 1917, the department is preparing a pledge card for this year's gardeners. Each fortunate possessor of a war garden will receive a pledge card, to which he will append garden results at the end of the season. The card, it is hoped, will not only stimulate amateur gardeners to fresh efforts, but also will give in detail a record much desired by the department.

War gardens are urged and wanted not only because patriotism dictates, but likewise because of their innumerable conveniences and the immense advantage and the real comfort families derive from them. Gardens in the country are taken more or less for granted, and suburban districts are steadily increasing their quota of gardens, but it is city gardening that the department is doing its utmost to encourage. City conditions are generally conceded to be adverse to successful gardening, but the department is endeavoring to show that the greatest success is to be had in the experience of the average city dweller along horticultural lines.

City gardening, unfortunately, is frequently strange and novel things, as seen through the eyes of the farmer, but they can be quite as successful as the farmer's vegetable garden. Once a city family has a taste of first-class produce from its own garden the family ambition is bound to soar, which promises well for next season. And, indeed, aside from the pleasure of having fresh vegetables at hand, many other things to be said in favor of the city garden.

Intelligent garden carefully planned and intelligently cared for is bound to bring results and there is not the slightest necessity of its becoming a burden. The energy which goes into garden exercise ordinarily escapes by way of less practical channels; indeed, an astonishing amount is foolishly frittered away.

Assuming that Mrs. Jones wishes to raise her own vegetables during the coming season, and in case she is frankly at sea as to just the proper method of proceeding, she will communicate with the office of pomological and horticultural investigation, Department of Agriculture in Washington. From this office will emanate a vast fund of general information and she will immediately be put in touch with local conditions and who are in a position to give her much valuable advice.

Mrs. Jones may have only a tiny garden plot, but she will be astonished to learn the quantity of good things that she can raise in this tiny space. Or Mrs. Jones may have no vacant ground at all, in which case she will be informed of a limited area at her disposal near her own home. If her particular neighborhood is unusually cramped for room, she may indeed be forced to grow her garden stuff on a roof or in window boxes. Even this is far better than nothing, for it insures a supply of fresh radishes, lettuce, parsnips, and other of the smaller but exceedingly palatable vegetables.

Many urbanites are planning to make their gardens on the roofs of their houses or in the window boxes. Spare time will be utilized to excellent advantage in exercise about the garden, and the outdoors becomes a healthy and interesting compensation in actual achievement and luscious food.

Men and women, boys and girls of all ages and in every walk of life become interested and enthusiastic over gardening if they have an opportunity to work about in one. Most children delight in it. The parents of one child interested their five-year-old in it to such an extent this past season that he insisted on doing his own planting in so far as he was able. He sprinkled his garden assiduously each day and watched eagerly for the first sign of tender green shoots. When they appeared he was thoroughly excited and anxious to see them grow big and strong rapidly. He was shown how to weed, how to dig, and how to control the common foes of his garden, and that they must be fought and conquered. With a right good will he aided in weeding and in keeping his garden fit and trim. When his vegetables had reached maturity he knew their names perfectly, and an amazing amount about each variety. He could be trusted to go joyously into the garden for any one of the several varieties and to return with the right one.

The Department of Agriculture knows of one man who had an odd and original garden. This individual was determined to grow as much as he could for home consumption. He was embarrassed, however, by lack of proper ground. But he soon conceived a novel idea. He straightway gathered together a number of empty barrels and arranged them as he wanted them in the limited area of his back yard. Laborious work was required to fill the barrels to within a third of the top with ashes. The ashes were covered with a generous foot of soil which, in turn, was planted with a variety of vegetables. The unique garden was given every attention and amply repaid the gardener in fine lettuce, radishes, carrots, and other vegetables.

The department divides gardens into three classes, designated as back-yard gardens, vacant lot gardens and school gardens. The first of these is given first place because of its inevitable intimacy with the gardener. Of course, it is readily understood that the back-yard garden is by far the most convenient.

The only regret is that the average back-yard garden is not of sufficient size to grow satisfactorily any great variety of vegetables. The department suggests the following: String beans, tomatoes, cabbage, beets, onions and all the smaller vegetables. The back-yard



A VARIETY OF VEGETABLES CAN BE RAISED IN THE CITY GARDEN.

gardener often has a garden superior to that of the man who works over half an acre or more; the former has less to claim his attention and consequently gives what he has more care than is possible when a garden is larger and but one or two people available to do all the labor. The department emphasizes the fact that the secret of the best back-yard gardens is fertility of soil, which is true of all gardens.

The importance of the vacant lot garden, agricultural experts allege, must not be underestimated. Vacant lots are very often of an ideal size for the raising of potatoes, cauliflower, corn, asparagus, eggplant, peas, spinach, melons and other plants that cannot be successfully grown in ordinary back yards. Boy and girl scouts and other clubs are urged to interest themselves in these vacant lots which can be made most productive. People with any estate are urged to interest themselves in many unsightly spots, for if growing plants do nothing else they are often a means of hiding ground which, left to itself, soon becomes there with every sort of disgusting debris.

Last year many favorable reports were submitted to the department showing the result of work on vacant lots performed by the country's boys and girls. Children are paid well for vegetables they raise. It has been ascertained that, in innumerable instances, they have been paid a higher price than market could obtain for practically the same commodities. This is an incentive to the child, but the department thinks it wiser for each city to adopt a scale of prices.

From the office of pomological and horticultural investigation some interesting data can be found. For example, from a report on the home gardens of the city of Washington, the following is shown: "Average area per garden, 166 square feet; average expenditure for labor per garden, 14¢; average labor and expense were divided into two parts, 62 per cent for the interest was unquestionable, as her knowledge and experience accumulated also necessitated practical lessons in economics.

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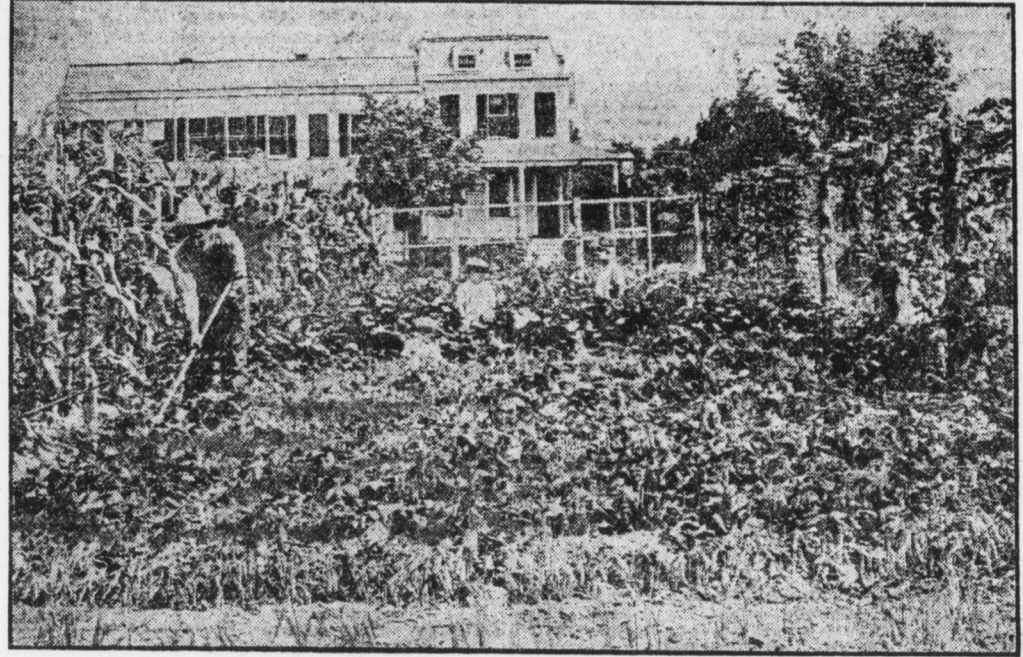
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Gardens under the supervision of schools or institutions are often more successful than gardens raised by the average individual, assuming that it is a novice. This is because an organized body of persons who have acquired much practical knowledge through years of study and experience and understand whose management all horticultural work comes. In club work the members soon develop a good-natured spirit of competition, which stimulates a course in gardening.

In casing about for available gardens the amateur is cautioned against choosing any area shaded for a great part of the day. Such a spot may seem highly desirable because of location, size, etc., but to plant seed in soil that has less than three or four hours of sunshine each day is to court disaster. Foliage crops can be coaxing to flourish with but three sunny hours. To expect peppers or tomatoes, for instance, to respond to less than five hours of sunshine daily is to foredoom them to failure.

Soil is the next consideration. A cursory examination will quickly disclose its character. Hardy plants will adapt themselves to about any kind of soil except that which is made up primarily of stones, bricks and mortar. In case soil is found to be sticky and clayey, the department advises a two or three inch sprinkling of coal ashes. Ashes and soil should be thoroughly mixed.

In other localities a sandy loam may dominate, and in seeking to improve this condition the gardener must resort to a fertilizer which will correct



THE KIND OF A VEGETABLE GARDEN IN WHICH UNCLE SAM DELIGHTS.

the sandy state sufficiently to insure the growth of healthy crops. Soils in every part of the world are greatly improved by certain kinds of fertilizer, and their productivity thereby increased.

After these preliminaries have received the consideration due them the wise gardener will bring forth his garden plan which he has carefully

drawn up during long winter evenings. These plans are similar to maps, and indicate in just what spots certain vegetables are to be planted. If more than one planting has been decided upon this is also noted. The department highly commends these plans, for in studying them out many details will come up for discussion that otherwise

would not be thought of until too late for a thorough solution.

To insure an even distribution of sunshine on plants it is always advisable to run rows for planting north and south. It is desirable to place vegetables which will grow year after year without replanting to one side, where it will not be necessary to disturb them as the seasons roll around. Corn, peas, etc., grow to a considerable height, and one must be careful to plant them in such a way as not to deprive any of the others of sunlight.

## Canteen Work of Red Cross Along Battle Front in France

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There is probably not a single canteen in France among all the long line of rest and refreshment stations that the American and French Red Cross are uniting to establish where somebody's genius for homemaking or poetry is not bringing an unexpected bit of comfort or interest or beauty. Where this bit of home or spirit is expressed, immediately it affects every one, like an amazingly swift compound interest and extending its influence to the next sojourner and the next canteen along the line.

There is one canteen where an American woman has planted a flower bed along a munition factory wall. And there is another where a French soldier left a book for his fellows to write or draw sudden "inspiration" in—and they did—experiences that the newcomers roar with delight over, tributes to lost comrades and great sacrifices, drawings that some day may be immortal, a "blank" book which some time will help assure generations of France to love and understand this one.

There is still another canteen where a woman worker has made a shelf for children's toys, for the small visitors who come sometimes. And, at a great railroad station where the troop trains start for the front, Mme. Courcel (never rests) takes the flowers or the lovely weeds and grasses which have been decorating her refreshment truck from which the outgoing soldiers have been having bread and coffee and fastens them high and neatly to the end of the train just before it moves out—the field flowers, the lilies and the flag of France.

Many American women who have been living abroad are now in the canteen service of the Red Cross. Fifty have recently sailed, fifty more are preparing to go soon, and other groups continually will be leaving. Wherever they will be on duty in this war some outward life of the spirit will blossom. The nearer they are to the front line the more frequently their sheds, their cellars or their dugouts are bombarded, the more naturally will they hang green branches to the door, festoon the ceiling with bright colors or tack some heartening picture to the wall, not out of deliberate purpose, but out of their natural instinct.

It is, perhaps, the principal reason why they are so needed. There is something almost wistful in women's wonder if they will rise to the emergencies of havoc and destruction. They have been out in many a shattered place, and yet the next shed under the same fire had more of home than the one before. It is woman in war and in peace.

There are various kinds of canteens

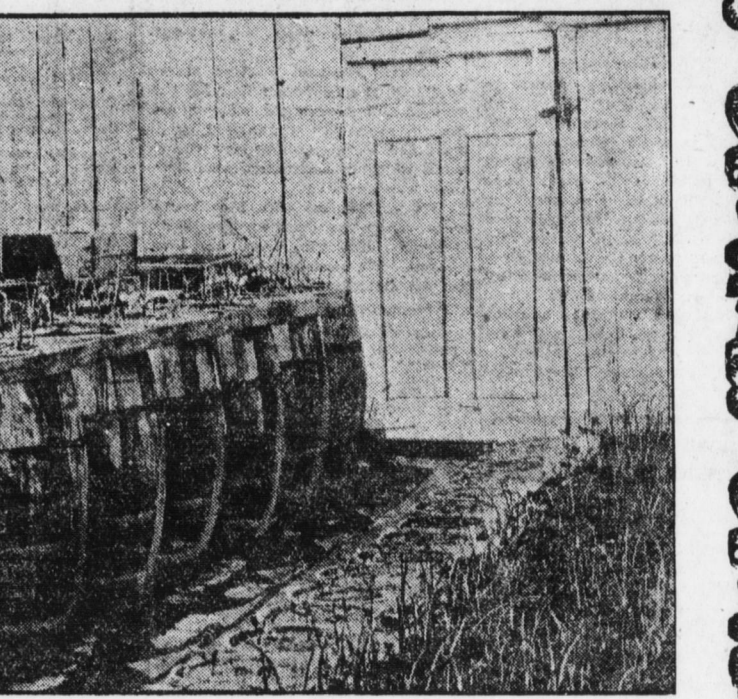


A RED CROSS CANTEEN WORKER IN FRANCE.

now in the field, from the portable kitchens which send hot drinks right up to the men in the trenches to the way stations that afford hot meals, sleeping rooms, recreation, baths, disinfecting and laundry plants. Each one has its own individuality.

One of these large canteens is unique in several respects. In the first place, it was constructed solely by the labor

of German prisoners of war. It is built in a train shed, divided into apartments, decorated, perhaps fearfully and wonderfully, but after the heart of the French soldier. There is a pink room, a blue room, a green room and a room whose walls are gayly striped. There is an abundance of plaster figure decorations in "near-Della Robbia" style, bodiless cherubs, flying figures, not



A NOVEL GARDEN MADE FROM BARRELS.

An efficient gardener will compel a maximum yield, which means more than one planting in a season. There are sections of the country which can easily grow three or more crops on the same piece of land in a single season. Says the Department of Agriculture: "The vegetable used for the first planting, or one with the same characteristics or belonging to the same place, should not be used in the same place at the second planting."

Rotation of crops is a study in itself. Proper rotation greatly retards the spreading of plant diseases and an increase in the number of injurious insects. Rotation also plays an important part in the conserving of plant foods.

Authorities emphatically declare that no seed is available for the gardener who is not deeply in earnest. There is

no need to be wasted. If every one buys just as much as he needs and no more, there will be enough to go around, but to waste seed will mean a deprivation for some one. When a garden is planned out some time in advance it is possible to tell just how much seed is needed even when three or more plantings are to be made. The department thinks it advisable to buy sufficient seed to meet the gardener's demand for the entire season.

Seed should not be selected indiscriminately or because the pictures in a seed catalogue are attractive. The varieties chosen should be studied with an eye to their adaptability to the particular region in which they are to be grown. Standard varieties invariably give the amateur gardeners the most satisfaction and those purchased from well known seed houses carry with them a certain guarantee.

It is best to buy seed some weeks before one uses it, and, furthermore, the department admonishes new gardeners in regard to protecting fresh seed from rats and mice. Rodents make heavy work of one's supply if given the opportunity.

In case one has seed left from the season previous, it is desirable to use that which is good. A test is suggested by which seeds with the necessary vitality can be gleaned from those incapable of producing healthy plants. From each variety of seed left over from twenty-five to fifty seeds. Place these in a damp cloth, put them in one plate and cover them with another. These can be watched and if, in the course of five or six days, sixty or more per cent of the seeds under test send forth sturdy little sprouts, it is reasonable to conclude that they have the required vitality.

Seeds should never be planted until after the last killing frost in the spring. Small seed is generally covered by a quarter or three-quarters of an inch of earth, larger seed by a good two inches. It is sown considerably thicker than it is desirable to have the matured plants. This is done in order to insure a supply of hardy plants. After the plants have begun their growth, the weaklings can be removed to make way for their more stalwart brothers and sisters.

weeks in a canteen many things that once loomed large seem small, and many little things seem the great wonders of the world.

A French girl, an American girl to her mother, written after her first day as an assistant at one of the Croix Rouge canteens near Paris, tells of her encounter with the soldier who had said good-bye to a departure of the troops.

While I was talking with the director through the little canteen, she writes, "I was carrying one of her big baskets, she was called away by a soldier. I saw her go, but she kept a funny little dark soldier came up and got quite excited at the contents of my basket (a big pink box). The soldier, whose significance I knew not, in a very businesslike manner he grabbed the tin can and stuck it on the ground, placed the loaf of bread he was carrying on top of it so it wouldn't get soiled, and he kept insisting for one of the pink boxes, showing me by pantomime that he wanted me to pull it apart and let him have some of it."

"I kept telling him that I couldn't sell the tin can, but he insisted that I should longed to Miss G. and the more I protested the more insistent he became. Soon we had a crowd of young soldiers, a few of them understood my French and more of them didn't and the ones who did stood ready to fight. I was in a quandary as to how to get out of there, but I kept repeating he only wanted to buy, but buy he must. The crowd of fifty or sixty soldiers was so excited and so certain he had taken him off if it hadn't been such a friendly fight.

"I finally said my appeal to my opponent. I said very slowly and emphatically, syllable by syllable, in French, so he would be sure to understand, that I did not speak or understand French. And he, thinking this a piece of the most flattering coquetry, burst into a thousand exclamations and tried to force all his sows in my hand with one of his hands, and to make a slit with his fingernail on the pink wrappings of my boxes with the other.

"Just then I saw Miss G., and ran after her, the crowd opening to let me through. When I found her and told her about the passionate eagerness for something in the pink boxes she said 'I could find him again to bring him to her, that the boxes were Algerian cigarettes and that he had served in the colonies and was doubtless wild for some, and she would let him have an extra loaf.'

"I found him finally and told him to come with me, and ever did you see any one so thoroughly scared. He hadn't known Miss G.'s name, and it surely dawned upon him that the boxes were hers, and all that I'd been trying to tell him. He must have thought that we were going to arrest him, for he started to run away. A couple of the soldiers got on each side of him and he kind of taken aback for me. I tried to assure him by my 'tres biens' and 'cigarettes pour vous' and 'merci', and I was so suspicious. Thanks to the others, we got him pushed up to where Miss G. was, and she filled both his hands. He was so bewildered, I think, that he was so bewildered, I think, that he was the most pathetic little figure in all France."