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Homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

TUESDAY, APRIL 18, 1944.

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QUESTION BOX:

Beans in victory garden?
How plant tomatoes?
What soil for carrots?
Why permit to burn brush?

ANSWERS FROM garden and forestry specialists of
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

CURRENT SERIAL RECORD

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If the letters coming in to the U. S. Department of Agriculture are any indication, we're making good strides toward the national goal of 22 million victory gardens for 1944. Everywhere, patriotic Americans are busy doing their part to help meet the food needs of the nation for the coming year.

Today the garden experts are going to answer letters on three subjects that seem to be popular among victory gardeners: beans...tomatoes...and carrots. But before I read the first letter, let me remind you of the two new garden bulletins that you can have free of charge by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. The names of these bulletins are "Growing Vegetables in Town and City," and "A Victory Gardener's Handbook on Insects and Diseases." Just ask for the bulletins on "Growing Vegetables" and "Insects and Diseases."

Now for our first garden letter: A homemaker asks, "What kind of beans are best for a victory garden? Is it a good idea to grow navy beans?"

To answer the second question first, the garden experts think dried beans, such as navy beans, aren't desirable for the average small victory garden. Compared with some of the other vegetables they yield a small amount of food, and anyway they're available all year round.

But as for other beans-- one of the most profitable crops you can grow in a small garden is snap beans. Limas produce more inedible matter than snap beans... but even so they're a very good crop too. And of course we mustn't forget soybeans -- they're becoming very popular with gardeners everywhere.

Beans do well on any good garden soil, but be sure you don't give them too

much lime, as that is definitely harmful to snap beans. If your garden's small, pole beans may take up less space than bush beans. You can plant pole beans in hills of three to four plants, with a pole to climb on...or in rows with a wire or trellis to support the plants.

Plant bean seed so it's covered with not more than one inch of earth in heavy soil, and one and a half inches on sandy soil. Beans are sensitive to cold, so make sure the soil is warm before you plant them. Local garden authorities can tell you when to plant, and the best varieties to use.

Now let's see what's in our next letter. This writer says, "I'd like to ask some questions about tomatoes: whether they're a good vegetable for a beginner to try growing, and if so, when to plant them, what kind of soil they need, how much fertilizer, and which are the most successful varieties."

Well, that's quite an array of questions, but well worth asking and answering, because tomatoes are one of the best crops you can plant in your garden. They grow under a variety of conditions...they produce a lot of food for the space they occupy...and they're one of our best foods from the standpoint of both flavor and nutrition. So if you can, plant enough tomatoes for both summer eating and canning. (And right here I might mention tomato juice is very popular with the army - and they get first call on this year's supply, so you'd better plan to can your own tomato juice).

Tomatoes will do well on any reasonably good soil, but be sure they have full sun--otherwise you'll get mostly stem and leaves, and not much fruit. Over fertilizing with manure, or other fertilizer rich in nitrogen, also causes the plants to "go to leaves" and produce little fruit.

Many gardeners grow their own tomato seedlings, but for a small garden (and especially if this is your first garden) it's probably better to buy the few plants you need. Get plants about 8 inches high--experienced local gardeners can tell you which varieties are best, and what's the best time for transplanting. Work a handful of victory garden fertilizer into about a bucketful of soil at the spot



where each plant will be set. Don't use manure--as I said earlier, it contains too much nitrogen for tomatoes.

In most small gardens the best plan is to prune tomato plants to a single stem, or two stems, and tie them to stakes. This way they take up less room than if you leave them to spread out on the ground. Staked and pruned plants often suffer from blossom-end rot, but you can keep this down by careful irrigation, so as to give the plants uniform moisture, and also by mulching around the plants with straw, leaves, or dried lawn clippings to keep in the moisture.

Well, that pretty well covers the subject of planting tomatoes...now for carrots. The question is, "What's the best soil for carrots?"

The garden specialists say carrots produce misshapen roots, and don't yield well, in soil that's wet, clayey, heavy, stony or trashy. Another difficulty with such soils is that the seedlings have trouble getting a good start. So plant carrots on deep, loose soil free from clods, stones, and trash.

If your soil tends to form a crust at the surface, start the carrots by covering the seeds only about one-fourth inch deep with soil, and then cover the row with some fine material such as leafmold or peat.

When the carrots come up, thin them so they're at least an inch and a half or more apart, to give them plenty of growing room.

Now we just have time for a brief answer to a letter which says, "We had to get a permit before we could burn off the land for our victory garden. Why is this necessary?"

Requiring a permit to burn off land is a precaution many communities take, to keep fires from damaging valuable property by making people more conscious of their responsibility to keep such fires under control. In fact, this year the danger from forest and woods fires is greater than ever, due to the manpower shortage, so if your garden's near forest-land it's particularly important to be careful with fires, because timber is a vital war material, and we can't afford to let any of it burn up.

Even if your garden's not near a forest, it's probably near other valuable property--homes, fields, or barns. So if you must burn off any land, take extra care to keep the fire from spreading and damaging nearby property.

