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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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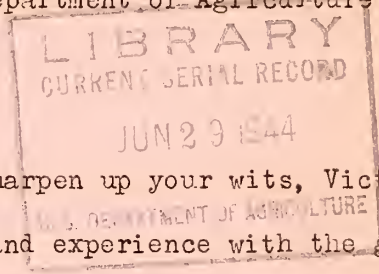
U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Tuesday, June 27, 1944

QUESTION BOX:

When pick vegetables?
When cultivate?
When weed?

ANSWERS FROM gardening specialists
of U. S. Department of Agriculture



Today we are going to have a quiz show. So sharpen up your wits, Victory Gardeners, here's your chance to match your skill and experience with the garden experts.

Here are three questions which we have sifted from the big stack of those Victory gardeners have asked U. S. Department of Agriculture garden specialists to answer.

Everyone all set? Good. Here's the first question, "When is the best time to pick vegetables?"

The best time, so the Department garden men say, is before the vegetables are too large, coarse and have lost flavor. Take the highest priced canned snap beans, for example. They are known as the French type. You'll recall that they are picked when they are half or three-fourths grown and packed whole. Take beets. The most expensive and delicious canned beets are the rosebud kind. You pull them when the beet is an inch or so in diameter. The most toothsome corn is picked in the early milk stage - and so it is with the other vegetables we are raising. Pick them young. Even tomatoes can be left on the vines too long, and may develop a bad flavor, because of being over-ripe.

Lima beans and peas become dry and tasteless if you let 'em stay on the vine even a day or so after they are ready for use. Old-time gardeners know that one of the biggest rewards the home gardener gets for his work is the chance to have vegetables when they are at the peak of their quality.

Many people say they do not like vegetables. This may be due to the fact that they have never had a chance to know how really good vegetables can be. There you have the answer!

Now let's take another, "When is the best time and what is the best method of cultivating a garden?"

Well, the best time to cultivate is when the rows of plants come up out of the ground and are well marked. After that cultivate, after every rain or watering just as soon as you can get on the ground without messing up the soil. In between times, too, you can cultivate often enough to keep the top soil loose and stirred up to a depth of an inch or so.

This gets the weeds before they have a chance to get a good start. But here and there, of course, some weeds must be rooted out by hand, where the cultivator did not reach.

The good old-fashioned hoe will do the trick, of course. Then there is the wheel hoe and wheel cultivator, but more and more Victory Gardeners are not leaning entirely on the hoe, either actually or figuratively, but favor the small 4-tined hand cultivator. This is almost a "must" tool for the small garden. Keep the surface soil loose with this handy tool and you will also keep down weeds, too.

Of course many of you are making mental notes, or actually jotting down these tips from the garden experts. Here's another question that naturally follows the one just asked, because it's about weeding.

"What's the best way to weed a Victory Garden?"

As all of us know weeding can be an awful bore. Don't let it become backbreaking work. If you let the weeds get ahead of you it means you will have some really physical exercise that isn't necessary. Besides, large weeds rob your vegetables of water and fertility. That means scrubby plants. Don't, by all means let weeds go to seed near your garden, either. If you do you

will have a tough army of invaders in your garden that will cause you a lot of unneeded work. Get all weeds early and you will save yourself a lot of trouble.

That sounds like very good advice. That's a good tip too, on when to pick vegetables so that they will be at the peak of their goodness. Remember, even an extra day vegetables are left on plant or vine may take away some of their tastiness and wholesome goodness. That's where Victory Gardeners have a definite edge on those who have to take their vegetables as they find 'em in the store.

But that is one of the thrills of gardening. Another is to realize when you grow your own, you are helping make food go that much farther as a weapon of war.

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