

Since we had a large garden area and a large family to feed, we planted potatoes each year in early May, choosing a date so that the plants could come up after the last frost in May. Father would work the soil, and put the potato plow onto the tractor while Mother would cut the seed potatoes into chunks, making sure that each piece had a healthy sprout on it. Then we called the children to come and help. Some would follow the plow down the furrow and drop in the chunks of potato, about 15 to 18 inches apart. Another child would push a little soil over each potato bud and the oldest child would sprinkle some fertilizer down the row. Then, Father would cover the potatoes with the plow, heaping up the soil and leaving ditches between the rows to catch the rain so the plants would get much needed water all summer.

In October, after the potatoes had grown and blossomed, and the tops were drying off, it was time to harvest. One son had a couple city friends over the day we were digging potatoes, so they learned how it was done and had a lot of fun helping. Father would drive the tractor, following each row as straight as possible so that the plow, set deeply, would unearth the potatoes. It was the childrens' job to run after the tractor--barefoot, of course, a thing not often done in the city--and grab all the potatoes they could find peeking through the upturned soil. When their ice cream pail was full, they emptied it into an area alongside the garden so the potatoes would dry. Some of the children would take a potato, wash it at the pump and eat it raw--a taste I could never understand!

When all the rows were plowed open, Father would go over the field with a drag which would "rake" the heaps and unearth more of the potatoes that were buried in heaps, while the children once again ran after the tractor and tried to see how many times they could refill their pails. They had fun and it really helped to get the job done quickly. Later in the day, when the potatoes had dried and the soil was easy to brush off, we would all pick them up in burlap bags or bushel baskets and haul them to our root cellar for storage. We usually had enough to last us all winter. Gardening is a healthy and rewarding occupation.