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SHALL I PLANT A GARDEN THIS YEAR?

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It may seem to be rather an inopportune time to be thinking of planting a garden when the winter wind is howling about the house and the ground is solidly frozen. Yet time passes rapidly, and unless some thought is given the garden in winter, the season for planting will find us unprepared. If we expect to have good gardens this year, now is the time to make definite plans to that end.

One of the advantages, from a personal standpoint, of having a good home garden, is that it can be made to furnish a continuous supply of vegetables for the table thruout the season. Furthermore, vegetables of the best quality can be supplied to the owner of a garden at a minimum expense and in a much fresher condition than if purchased in the market. At the present time, however, the personal advantages to be gained from a home vegetable garden are much less important than our duty to the nation. The substitution of vegetables for some of the more concentrated foods in the diet of those who remain at home will release for the use of the American army and the Allies large quantities of cereals, meats, and other food supplies that are readily transported because of their more concentrated form. And the substitution of homegrown vegetables for those shipped in from a distance and handled thru the market will reduce the amount of transportation necessary to supply food for the folks at home, and thus will assist in relieving the car shortage, and enable the railroads to use their equipment in the way that will best serve the interests of the entire nation.

It seems, then, that both from the standpoint of personal advantages and of patriotic duty every one who can should plant a garden this year. It should be remembered, however, that *planting* is only the initial step in gardening. Many gardens planted in hope and enthusiasm last year were utter failures; many planted this year are likely to be failures also, unless the people who plant them realize that gardens require continued care. The two great causes of failures in home gardens are the lack of knowledge of the cultural requirements of the different vegetables, and the lack of sustained interest in the garden thru the season. Too many beginners at gardening are filled with enthusiasm in the balmy days of spring, and proceed to plant, plant, plant, without giving due consideration to the tasks that are to follow under the blistering heat of the summer sun. Their interest wanes with the increasing length of the days, and their crops become choked with weeds and are attacked by beetles and blight. What started out as a garden becomes a waste; and the owner's enthusiasm for gardening is likely to be forever dampened.

The logical thing for a prospective gardener to do is to make a definite decision to give his garden consistent care thruout the whole season, and then to let nothing move him from that determination. In order to give his garden proper care, he must know what to plant in his particular locality and when to plant it. He must know which varieties will best meet his needs. He must know what insects and diseases to expect and how to combat them. The more he can learn about each of the crops he proposes to grow before he attempts to grow it, the better prepared for the season's tasks he will be.

It is none too early to begin preparations for this year's gardening. There are three things which should be done **now**:

(1) Bulletins and circulars and books on gardening should be read, and as much as possible learned about the various crops that are to be grown.¹

¹The following publications of this station on various phases of vegetable gardening are available at the present time, and may be procured free of charge by addressing the Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station, Urbana, Illinois.

- Bulletin 144 Growing Tomatoes for Early Market
- “ 155 Fertilizer Experiments with Muskmelons
- “ 174 An Efficient and Practicable Method for Controlling Melon Lice
- “ 175 Experiments in Onion Culture
- “ 184 Tests with Nitrate of Soda in the Production of Early Vegetables
- “ 188 Methods of Fertilizing Sweet Potatoes
- Circular 139 How to Grow Muskmelons
- “ 173 Onion Culture
- “ 182 The Fertilizer Problem from the Vegetable Grower's Standpoint
- “ 198 Home Vegetable Gardening
- “ 200 Possibilities of the Fall Vegetable Garden
- “ 201 Dried Bean Production in Illinois

(2) Seed catalogs should be procured, and a list made of varieties and quantities of seeds needed. If an order is placed for the seeds now, there will be no delay waiting for the seeds at planting time, or substitution of undesirable varieties in order to procure the seeds in a hurry.¹

(3) A definite plan of the proposed garden should be made on paper. This plan should indicate the location of each kind of vegetable in the garden, the distance between the rows, and the approximate time of planting each crop. Since a home garden is a personal matter, the plans made by different individuals will reflect their particular tastes. However, in all garden plans, it is desirable that an arrangement of the crops be employed which will make the best possible use of the available space and at the same time minimize labor in preparation and care. Suggested plans are given in Figs. 1 and 2. Plans for gardens of various sizes are also given in Circular 198 of this station.

¹A list of desirable varieties is contained in Circular 198.

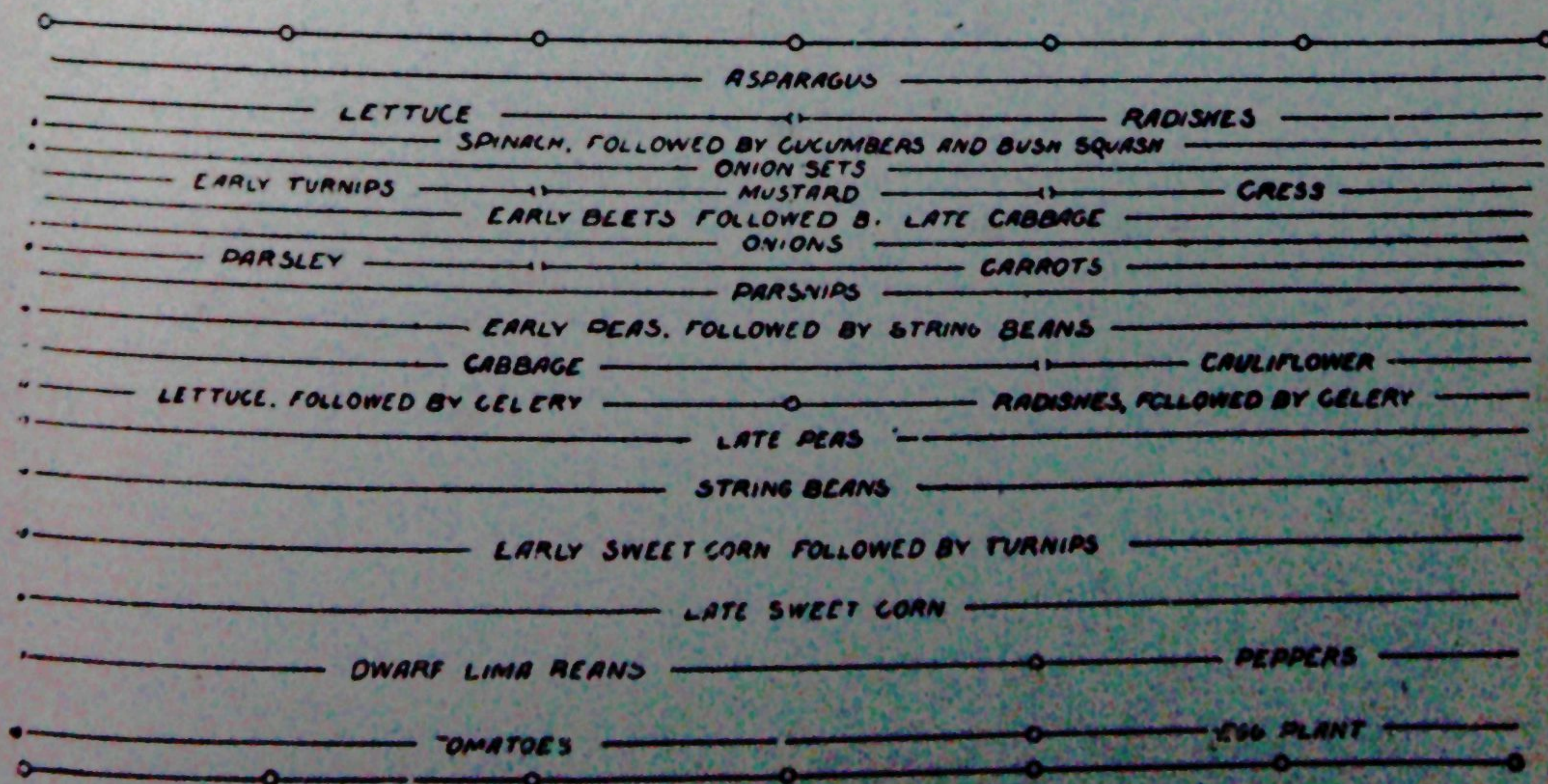


FIG. 1.—DIAGRAM OF A SUBURBAN GARDEN 30 FEET BY 60 FEET

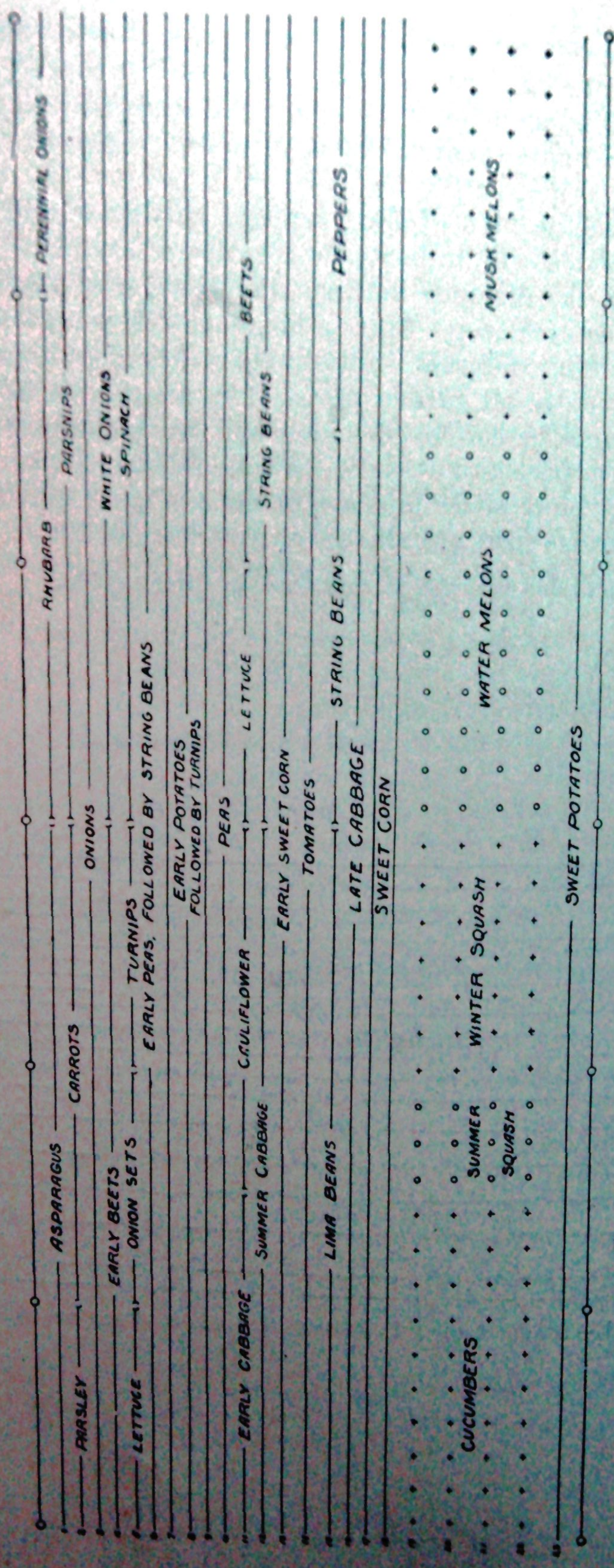


FIG. 2.—DIAGRAM OF A FARMER'S VEGETABLE GARDEN 90 FEET BY 240 FEET

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