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**MEMOIRS**

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IN

**HUSBANDRY AND RURAL AFFAIRS.**

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“ Let us cultivate the ground, that the poor as well as the rich, may be filled ; and  
“ happiness and peace be established throughout our borders.”

*Tentanda Via est, qua nos quoque possimus tollere Humo :—*



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*On Sea Kale. By Samuel Miller, D. D.*

*Princeton (N. J.) Oct. 13, 1817.*

SIR,

My brother-in-law, Mr. Sergeant, informs me that you have expressed a wish to be furnished with some of the seed of the sea-kale, for the purpose of cultivating that delightful vegetable. I do myself the honour to send a parcel herewith, and shall be very glad if the product should answer your expectations.

The sea kale, or *crambe maritima*, has been long known in those parts of Great Britain which border on the sea coast, where it grows wild, in a light, sandy soil. Its introduction into gardens is a recent event. At present, I am informed, it is one of the most favourite articles of cultivation in that country. It is one of the most tender and delicious of all the numerous species of the brassica, or cabbage tribe, not excepting even the cauliflower. It does not, like most cabbages, form a head; and it would be both coarse and tough if it were not bleached. It is a very early plant, being ready for the table ten days or a fortnight before the usual time of beginning to cut asparagus. Like asparagus, it is perennial. When you have once formed a bed of the sea kale, it will continue to produce abundantly, when managed with tolerable care, for a number of years.

I received the first seed which I planted from John Lowell, esquire, of Massachusetts. From his letter, and from my own experience, I am enabled to offer the following directions for cultivating this vegetable.

It delights in a dry, sandy, hungry soil, and requires no manure. In rich and moist land it is said to be apt to rot.

The seed should be deposited in rows, about three feet apart, each way. For this purpose I formed a long bed, slightly raised, and a little wider than a common asparagus bed, in which I made two rows. From three to five seeds ought to be deposited in a place, to provide for failures, which are not uncommon with this kind of seed. After they have come up, all the plants or stools may be removed, excepting one, the most vigorous and promising. As the seed is a long time in coming up, sometimes as much as eight or ten weeks, I found it convenient to mark each place where it was deposited with a little stick, that the plant might be kept free from weeds, and also that the danger of pulling it up with the weeds might be avoided. It ought to be sown about the first of April, or from that to the tenth.

During the first summer and autumn, the plant, if circumstances be favourable to its growth, will send out large, coarse, thick, sea green leaves, which, instead of forming a head, will lie flat on the ground. Some of the most vigorous stools or plants, will cover a space of two and even three feet in diameter. Toward November the leaves will die, and the whole plant will appear as if about to perish. Soon after this takes place, *i. e.* generally about the middle or latter end of November, the whole bed should be covered pretty thick with seaweed, long litter, tan, or some similar substance calculated to preserve it from the frost. If none of these are at hand, the earth may be heaped around each plant, covering it to the depth of several inches. I have always been careful, in covering each root, or stool, in the autumn, (denuded of its leaves, as before described) to mark its situation by a stick, that in the process of un-

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covering in the spring, there might be no difficulty in finding the plant, nor any danger of injuring it by an unintentional stroke of the hoe.

In the spring, as soon as the frost is out of the ground, the covering of manure should be removed, and dug round the plants, taking great care not to wound or injure them. Each plant should then be *covered closely* with a garden pot, or a wooden box, or a little fresh tan, or, (which is said to be best of all,) some sea sand should be heaped over it to the height of about one foot. Mr. Lowell uses an earthen pot, which is the neatest and most simple mode of covering and bleaching the plant. On account of the difficulty of getting proper earthen pots in this place, I cover mine with wooden boxes, very carefully made with close joints, and about twelve inches every way. Where none of these can be conveniently had, the common soil, provided it be dry, may be heaped over the plant. But if the season should be wet, the young shoots will be apt to rot.

About the middle of April, sometimes sooner, you may remove the covering, and examine the state of the plant. If it is sufficiently grown, it may be cut. One plant will furnish enough to fill a moderately sized dish. In cutting, great care ought to be taken, not to wound the crown of the plant. It may be cut down to within half an inch of the old crown of the last year. It should be cut but once in a season. Of course, when it is cut, the pot or box should be laid aside, and the plant suffered to grow in the open air, and run to seed, which it will do, every year, with great luxuriance. The bleached shoots, as they appear on removing the pot, are of a most brilliant white, and the tops of a most beautiful violet colour. A more elegant vegetable I never saw.

The process of bleaching and cutting ought not to be too soon commenced. It ought in no case to commence

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earlier than the *next spring* after sowing the seed ; nor even then, unless during the first summer the plants shall have grown so well, as to cover an extent of ground at least two feet in diameter. The best plan, in general, is to leave them near two years before the process of bleaching is begun ; in which case, like asparagus, they will reward your patience, by more vigour and productiveness afterwards.

The *seed* does not appear till the *second year*. And then, even if the plant be strong enough for bleaching and cutting, after the first flowering stem is cut off, it will send up another, and flower, and ripen its seeds. This ripeness is to be determined by the colour of the capsules. When they turn yellow and begin to fall, the stem ought to be cut off and hung up to dry. This will probably be toward the latter end of August, or the beginning of September.

This vegetable requires to be thoroughly boiled ; and if boiled in milk, or milk and water, it is more tender and delicious. A little melted butter is usually poured over it when served up. In short, it ought to be cooked and served up very much in the style of asparagus, excepting that it requires *rather more boiling*.

This vegetable, like most others, may be *forced*. For the sake of having a few plants earlier, as well as that the whole crop might not come on at once, I have generally thrown a wheelbarrow full of hot stable manure over each box, to the extent of about a quarter or a third of the bed. The best covering, I believe, for those which are intended to be *forced*, is an *earthen pot* ; which will keep the manure from coming in contact with the plant, and, at the same time, be a better conductor of heat than a wooden box. This liberal use of manure will occasion no loss, as it will be on the ground, ready to be used in neighbouring parts of the garden.

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The plant ought always to be covered for bleaching, as soon in the spring as the frost is out of the ground, and *before* the vegetation starts.

In the first, and every succeeding fall, the dead leaves should be carefully removed, lest they should rot the crowns of the plants, as they are very large and succulent.

I have generally sown the seed *without* breaking the capsules. Mr. Lowell, however, advises that *some* of the capsules be broken in sowing them. In England it is necessary to sow the seed in the fall, as it will not, there, come up the first year. In this country, it grows the first season as well as any other plant. Mr. Lowell recommends that *some* of the seed be sown in the fall, as he says he has observed that the seed dropped in the autumn, by the plant, usually comes up with great vigour: I take for granted he means in the succeeding spring.

You may perhaps imagine, from the length to which I have extended my directions, that this vegetable is difficult of cultivation. This, however, is by no means the case. Scarcely any article in the garden is more easily raised. I have been minute, perhaps unnecessarily so, that you might not be at a loss with respect to any point.

I have the honour to be, sir, with much respect, your obedient servant,

SAMUEL MILLER.

*Richard Peters, Esq.*