

Version:1.0 StartHTML:0000000182 EndHTML:0000002712 StartFragment:0000002363
EndFragment:0000002676
SourceURL:file:///localhost/Users/computer/Desktop/obiits/barefootfarmer.doc

Until 500 years ago the old world relied on small grains for their sustenance. Tiny seeds that had to be threshed out of the plants to provide something they could store and eat later. Then along came two plants which were far easier to harvest because they were big: corn and potatoes.

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Corn is in the grass family, like wheat, oats, barley, rye, rice and millet. But because it's so much larger it soon became the world's number one source of grain. I can imagine the feeling farmers got when they first grew these big ears and compared them to their little heads of wheat.

We've pulled off about 500 dozen ears of sweet corn lately, and we gave it to our members. Farmers seem to like to eat more than other folks. We eat it raw, straight from the stalk, while harvesting. The way native Americans bred corn from its wild ancestors still remains a mystery to botanists; nothing like it ever happened any where else in the world.

Potatoes really changed farming, too. Here was a storable food source that was easy to grow almost anywhere. It soon became a staple wherever it was introduced. I became happy when I eat potatoes.

Our customers get potatoes every week, so we've been digging a few rows every now and then since mid-June. By the end of July it's time to harvest the crop and it is always the hottest time of the year.

I grew an acre garden in Nashville for the Hermitage Hotel this year, and introduced several rows of spuds. They were dug last week, so we were well primed for our own fields after the 125 bushels that we dig there.

First the patches are bush hogged, and then the potato plow lifts them out of the ground.

Corn & Potatoes

Wednesday, August 11, 2010

Shuffling through the dirt exposes the gems, which I like to let air dry an hour or two. We field sort the first load and took the number ones to the cave and the number twos to the barn.

The day gets hotter and hotter. The bank thermometer says 107°. Now we are filling the baskets with all the spuds, and will sort them later in the shade. The creek saves our lives.

By the third day we decide no mid-day working, but we receive a blessing. Thunder showers threaten and we quickly load but get no rain, just cooler weather. After lunch it appears the rain has passed so we keep digging, picking up and loading the trucks. A downpour in Lafayette misses us and we enjoy the work in temperatures 20° cooler than before.

Several hundreds bushels need sorting, because the bad ones will spoil the others. Some potatoes will store all winter, and some will need to be used up soon. The place where the stem connects can turn black and cause rot, so we check everyone.

The sweet corn will be eaten up right away, except for a bit in the freezer. But the potatoes supply us, and a lot of other folks, with good eating all year long. I know my European ancestors survived without potatoes, but I sure am glad I don't have to.