

WITH THE PLASTIC-COATED milk cartons almost hidden from view by the tremendous growth of his tomatoes, cabbages and cucumbers, this was the view at harvest time of A. E. Belanger's vegetable garden near Highland. In spite of the stakes, the tomato plants were so full that their weight carried the ties right to the ground.

He Plants Milk Cartons Beside His Tomatoes

A Highland man has discovered an unusual new idea to increase the yield of the tomato plants and double the size of the cabbages that he grows in his Oakland County garden.

A. E. Belanger plants a plastic coated milk carton next to each tomato or cabbage plant at the time he starts his garden and uses them as water reservoirs to feed the roots of the plants directly.

Once Belanger collects all his cartons and washes them, he drills holes in the sides approximately a quarter-inch from the bottom and buries them about six inches from the plants. He leaves about half of the carton above ground, adds the prescribed amount of any proper fertilizer and fills the cartons with water.

AS THE WATER seeps into the ground, it carries the

fertilizer solution with it directly to the roots of the plants, giving them a steady feeding as they require it. When the carton is empty, whatever fertilizer is left collects at the bottom below the hole line, and when water is added to the carton again, it goes back into solution.

Belanger uses fertilizer just twice during the growing season, but points out that using the cartons makes it easy to keep the plants watered.

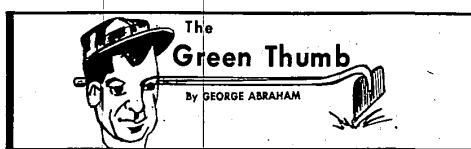
"There's no guessing," he said, "because the only time you have to water the plants is when the cartons are empty. Best of all, by the time the end of the growing season rolls around, the cartons are pretty well worn out, and you can either pull them out of the ground and throw them away or just plow them under where they quickly decompose."

Belanger's garden is mostly sand, but he is quick to point out that friends of his who use

this method of irrigation have had equal success in other kinds of soil. As to the type of carton?

Belanger says, "Almost every dairy in the country puts their milk in cartons, with the gable tops, and either the half-gallon or gallon sizes are ideal."

In looking at the growth of his plants, it's hard to deny that a carton garden is the only way to grow!



The Green Thumb

By GEORGE ABRAHAM

Home grown parsley: If I had to grow just one herb, it would be parsley.

This useful herb grows well in any good garden soil, even in partial shade. Sow seeds in rows 15 inches apart in spring, and thin out the plants to six or eight inches apart. Seeds germinate slowly and you might want to cover the row with a board to keep soil moist enough until germination starts. Some home gardeners mix a little radish seed with the parsley to mark the rows.

A row of parsley will last all summer and for winter use the plants can be potted up and grown indoors. Our parsley overwintered this year, due to snow covering and this suggests that if a straw mulch could be applied in fall, some parsley should come through the winter in fine shape. Incidentally, does any one

have a recipe for making parsley tea? Please send it along as we've had a request for it.

RHUBARB AGAIN: If you haven't a patch of rhubarb growing, better start one now. Spring is the best time to plant, and wood varieties to start with are McDonald and Valenite.

Perhaps your neighbor has a patch of rhubarb that needs dividing. Ask him for a clump or two. Plant four to five inches deep, with eyes up, in well-drained soil.

Rhubarb likes big doses of rotten manure or compost, three to six bushels per 100 sq. ft. Or use about five pounds of 10-10-10 fertilizer to a 100 sq. ft. patch. Don't harvest stalks till

the third year, but after their a full crop may be harvested in two months each spring. Pull the stalks out with a yank. Don't cut.

One problem with rhubarb is the curculio, a bug that stings stalks and leaves, sometimes causing an unsightly mess.

Control: Dust in May with rotenone before the pest comes along.

GREEN THUMB CLINIC: A reader writes: "Please tell us what kind of petunias we should grow. Last year we had poor luck with them."

There are many different types, but the singles are by far more popular. Multifloras are smaller-flowered, but they bloom so profusely they are preferred for mass planting.

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Birdlovers: Please Take Note

If you enjoy having birds around the house, plant trees and shrubs to make your feathered friends regular visitors (or even residents) of your yard.

"Some of the trees that birds like are flowering dogwood, holly, mountain ash, flowering crab apple, and the hawthorns," says Dr. Gary Schneider, associate professor of forestry at Michigan State University.

"They also prefer evergreens such as junipers, firs, spruces and red cedar."

If you want to provide fruit for the birds, Schneider suggests planting shrubs such as amur honeysuckle, snowberry, and the viburnums. Vines that attract birds include bitter-sweet, honeysuckle, and Virginia creeper.

"Seed-eating birds enjoy sunflowers, coreopsis, lilies-of-the-valley, and several different kinds of roses," says the MSU forester. "You may even attract a hummingbird by planting columbine, delphinium, phlox, false dragonhead or a red-hot poker plant."

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