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THERE is nothing quite like a war for starting a silly season.

This at once manifests itself in newspapers,

which, deprived of many normal sources of news, are only too glad to fill their correspondence columns with fatuous suggestions for making even more depressing puddings than usual, impossible chutneys, home-brewed beers and so on.

During the last war a large proportion of the population drank an evil concoction known as bee-wine and were lucky to survive; many more ate the stewed leaves of the common rhubarb and did not survive.

And in that war, as in this, the most fatuous and unnecessary suggestion of all was the one, I think, which proposed the ploughing up of the flower garden, and planting of vegetables in its place.

This proposal to reject the cultivation of flowers was made last September almost as soon as war was declared. We were instantly urged to dig up lawns in order to grow more food, though the only vegetables that could then be planted were spring cabbages, winter lettuces and broad beans.

There were solemn suggestions that the flower borders, then in their full beauty, should be cut down and filled with cabbages.

I doubt if one person in a thousand

**A PROPOSAL THAT IN WARTIME THE CITIZEN SHOULD GROW FLOWERS**



## TULIPS OR-

took this lamentable advice, but the unhappy fact remained that all over the country people ceased to buy flowers and flower seeds, bulbs and rose bushes, plants and trees for the coming spring.

One distant result of this was that the nursery trade of this country was brought, in a few days, to the edge of bankruptcy.

All this is the result, it seems to me, of a misguided idea that in time of war it is more noble, useful and patriotic for the citizen to grow potatoes instead of peonies, and turnips instead of tulips.

Such an idea seems to me only supportable when the normal

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agricultural output of a country has been expanded to its utmost limits; or when it can be proved that man lives by turnips alone.

The first question is of great importance. For it is still very far from true that the capacity for growing food in this country has reached its limit of expansion.

On the contrary, it has scarcely begun. It has been estimated by one of the largest East Anglian farmers, who is also an authority on agricultural economics, that this country could grow, without any revolutionary trouble at all, another £100,000,000 worth of foodstuffs every year.

That apparent miracle could be accomplished by scientific attention to the question of soil fertility, intensive production and the reclamation of derelict land.

Until that happens any suggestion that the private citizen should plant his back-garden lawn with potatoes is, I think, a joke.

There is another excellent reason why, I think, every gardener should persist in the growing of flowers as long as possible.

The nursery trade of this country is a large and important one; its survival is a national necessity. War has struck it a very hard blow indeed; so hard that plants, bulbs, rose trees

and fruit trees are cheaper this year than they have probably ever been.

I see on all sides nurserymen advertising stock at cost prices because "land must be cleared for food production."

In many cases I do not think this is true. A very bitter necessity has forced the use of that gag. It is a case of lie and sell, or perish.

The gardener will therefore be doing as much national service by buying a dozen rose trees as by planting a hundred cabbages.

I shall always maintain, any way, that the evolution of the cabbage was a great mistake.

All this, so far, has been an attempt to restrain the reader from acting on the misguided idea of replacing flowers by vegetables as an act of patriotism.

This has nothing to do with the increased production of vegetables in the vegetable garden itself. This is essential common

sense.

Instead of planting potatoes in the rose-bed, for example, it would be well to box new Scotch seed in shallow trays, induce early sprouting, practise a little natural selection by reducing the shoots to two on each tuber, and subsequently plant them in manured trenches at



## TURNIPS ?

900—BY H. E. BATES, AUTHOR OF "THE POACHER" & "SPELLA HO."

March 1944

Housewife

### Continuing TULIPS—OR TURNIPS?

distances of three feet on all sides.

The results will be remarkable. It is stated by the Ministry of Agriculture that enforced sprouting alone will increase the yield of potatoes by two tons per acre.

Again, the use of a frame in early spring, under a south wall or fence will be an excellent means of raising certain early vegetables. Carrots which were sown as soon as the year turned will yield excellent young carrots this March and April. Lettuces and even potatoes may be similarly sown.

French beans, runner beans and peas may be raised in boxes and later, when hardened, planted out in rows. In many cases they will yield produce three or four weeks earlier than seed normally planted.

By such trickery—always the prerogative of intelligent gardeners—the output of produce can be greatly increased.

Meanwhile it is not too late to plant bulbs. I have seen, and grown, splendid May tulips from bulbs planted as late as February. It is not too late to plant rose trees. It is even not too late to re-turf the lawn if, in some moment of excessive patriotism, it was dug up in September. Its greenness will have an incomparable quality of tranquillising the mind and eye in spring and summer.

Similarly, if you are to be as unfortunate as to be mutilated by a bomb, it will be well to ask yourself if you would prefer to lie in hospital within sight of a bowl of daffodils or clasping to your breast a bouquet of onions.

This article, therefore, is a shameless proposal that the citizen should, as long as this war does not bring us to complete famine, go on cultivating his flowers exactly as before.

The idea that man does not live by turnips alone is not revolutionary.

It is a very obvious one which the crisis of war makes us temporarily forget. For it is clear that in a time of excessive national strain it is the spirit, just as much as the stomach, that needs refreshment.

Flowers supply that refreshment in a form that nothing else can replace. They have become as important to invalids as medicine; they have been for centuries the symbolic expression of love and friendship, quarrels forgotten, happiness, sympathy, thankfulness.

In this country, perhaps, more than in any other in the world, they have become an expression of a national lyricism that might otherwise never be expressed.

In England, the French say, the love of flowers takes the place of art. I see no reason why that should not mean the art of war, too.

#### IN HOUSEWIFE NEXT MONTH

Patchwork: by G. B. Stern  
How This Housewife Plans  
Her Day

Bringing Spring Indoors—  
The Art of Arranging  
Flowers

You Can Re-cane That Chair  
HOUSEWIFE Designs a  
Bedroom

Shall We Send Our Children  
to an Elementary School?  
We Have! by H. E. Bates