

## GARDENING

# Garden Tools To Aid Blind

Strange tools help the blind to have gardens of their own. Wires guide rake and keep weeder safe distance from plants; rod keeps hoe from digging too deep.

► SPADES with bars to keep them from biting too deeply into the soil, hoes with clips so that wire can be used as a guide in keeping rows straight, and weeders with side extensions so they will not get too close to the crop—this strange assortment of garden tools enables blind men and women to have gardens of their own.

So that those who have lost their sight can prepare the soil, plant the seed in straight rows, get rid of weeds themselves and harvest the tomatoes, beans, lettuce, radishes and beets, special tools have been devised by Hugh Findlay of Hatch Lake, Eaton, N. Y. Formerly director of landscape architecture at Columbia University, Mr. Findlay has been devoting the last few years to teaching gardening to the blind.

Rows in these gardens, often ten or twenty feet long, are kept straight by attaching the tools to wire pulled very

taut between tee-rods forced into the ground at both ends of each row. One ankle is allowed to rub against the wire while raking or hoeing, to keep the tool from going off-center.

The depth to which the spade or hoe can sink into the soil may be changed by readjusting the gaging rod. If corn is to be planted in hills, the bar will be adjusted in the lower holes of the spade. The third set of holes, farthest from the tip of the spade, are used in planting potatoes. For late or midseason corn or beans, the bar will be fixed in the second set of holes in the hoe so the furrow may be drawn deeper.

While the plants are still young, a Norcross weeder can be used by adjusting the side extension, that runs along the wire, so the blades will not come too close to the plants. Weeds may also be kept under control by running a scuffle hoe along a guide wire placed between the rows. The blind gardener in this case straddles the wire as he works.

These special tools were first tried out by Armand Michaud of the Perkins Institute and Massachusetts School for the Blind, Watertown, Mass., who, though blind, already had done some gardening. A number of war-blind at the Naval Hospital in Philadelphia are being taught to use these special contraptions, already in use in 28 different states, Cuba, Canada and China. Within a few minutes a blind person can memorize these tools.

## Identify Soil by Feel

The right kind of soil for a garden, Dr. Findlay believes, can be identified by feel. Sometimes a sightless person can tell soil by its weight or smell, but it is always best to test the soil by placing a little in the palm of one hand and touching it carefully with the fingertips of the other.

The top and bottom of a bulb can be identified easily by its shape, and, in planting, the distance between the bulbs can be determined by measuring with the feet.

In sowing small garden seed, a small quantity is placed in the hand and with the aid of the thumb, the seed is worked

between the second and third knuckle. By keeping the wire over the furrow, when the tips of the fingers slowly follow the wire, the seed can be dropped in the proper place.

A hobby such as gardening keeps blind people out of doors, overcoming their natural tendency to stay in the house. Fascinating in all its phases, from first planting, through blooming with its wonderful fragrance, and the final triumph of a harvested crop, Mr. Findlay feels gardening is peculiarly adapted to the specialized senses and needs of the blind.

*Science News Letter, August 10, 1946*

## MEDICINE

## Rabbit Fever Pneumonia Cured by Streptomycin

► THE DRAMATIC recovery, thanks to streptomycin, of a patient dying of rabbit fever pneumonia, is reported by Drs. Richard B. Cohen and Richard Lasser of the Jewish Hospital of Brooklyn, N. Y., in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Aug. 3).

Neither penicillin nor sulfadiazine helped the patient. He was thought at first to be suffering from an atypical pneumonia caused by some virus. But as he got worse and because his job as stevedore might have brought him in contact with infected rodents, tests for plague and tularemia, or rabbit fever, were made.

The test for rabbit fever was positive and then it was learned from his relatives that he had gone rabbit hunting about three days before he got sick, though he had not skinned or eaten the rabbit he killed.

Within 48 hours after streptomycin treatment was started his fever dropped from 104 degrees Fahrenheit to 100 degrees, he felt much better and was on the road to recovery.

*Science News Letter, August 10, 1946*

## AERONAUTICS

## Military Planes Now Fly Knots and Nautical Miles

► YOU WILL have to brush up on your knots and nautical miles if you want to keep up with the Army and Navy planes in the future.

The knot is now the standard aeronautical unit of speed for both services, and the nautical mile is the corresponding unit of distance. This is the result of



**GARDEN FOR BLIND**—Distance from plants to the blade of the Norcross weeder is being measured to be sure the plants will not be injured. Note clip attached to the wire and winged screws for adjusting the distance of the weeder from the plants.