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DIRECTIONS
FOR
CULTIVATING
THE
CRAMBE MARITIMA,
OR
SEA KALE,
FOR THE
USE OF THE TABLE.

BY WILLIAM CURTIS,
AUTHOR OF THE FLORA LONDINENSIS.

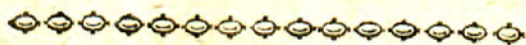
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CRAMBE MARITIMA. SEA KALE, or
COLEWORT.



Class and Order.

TETRADYNAMIA SILIQUOSA.

Generic Character.

Filamenta quatuor longiora apice bifida: altero antheri-
fero. *Pericarpium* simplex, globosum, deciduum,
2-articulatum.

Specific Character and Synonyms.

CRAMBE *maritima* foliis cauleque glabris. Linn. *Syst.*
Nat. ed. 13. *Gmel. p.* 992. *Syst. Vegetab. ed.*
14. *Murr. p.* 604. *Sp. Pl. ed.* 3. *p.* 937. *Fl.*
Suec. 570, 615. *Huds. Fl. Angl. ed.* 2. *p.* 299.
Lightfoot Scot. v. 1. *p.* 364. *Bryant Fl. Diæt.*
p. 124. *Mill. Dict.*

CRAMBE maritima Brassicæ folio. *J. R. H.* 211.
Sea Colewort. *Raii Syn. p.* 307.

BRASSICA maritima. *Baub. Pin. p. 112.*

BRASSICA marina sylvestris multiflora monospermos.
Lob. Adv. nov. p. 93. f.

BRASSICA Dobrica. *Turn. Herb. p. 90.*

BRASSICA marina monospermos. Sea Colewort. *Park.*
Th. 270.

BRASSICA marina fylvestris. Wilde Sea Coleworts.
Ger. Herb. p. 248. f. 16.

BRASSICA marina Anglica. English Sea Coleworts.
Ger. emac. 315. f. 15.



MUSEUM

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NATURAL
HISTORY.



Crambe maritima.

DIRECTIONS, &c.

THE *Crambe maritima* is found growing spontaneously, though locally, on the sea-shore of this our Island^a, as well as of

^a This Herbe groweth at *Dover*, hard by the sea-side, and in many other places.—I name it *Brassicam Dobricam*, in English, *Dover Cole*, because I found it first beside *Dover*. *Turn. Herb.*

Præter hæc, est etiam perquam pulchra Brassica, sylvestris Dioscoridis specie diversa, locis oriunda Angliæ maritimis ad *Portlandiam insulam*. *Lob. adv.* 93.

Groweth naturally upon the bayche and brimmes of the sea where there is no earth to be seen, but sand, and rolling pebble stones, which those that dwell near the sea do call Bayche. I found it growing between *Whitstable* and the *Isle of Thanet*, near the brincke of the sea, and in many places near to *Colchester*, and elsewhere by the sea-side. *Ger. Herb.*

Grows in many places on our own coasts, as well the *Kentish* as the *Essex* shore, as at *Lidde* in *Kent*, and *Colchester* in *Essex*. *Park. Th.*

Found

of many other parts of Europe^b; preferring the dry and pebbly to the moist and sandy beach.

This Plant is of the same natural class as the Cabbage, but differs from it and most of the Tetradynamous plants of LINNÆUS, in having a round seed-vessel, containing one seed only; it has other generic distinctions, some of which are striking and curious^c; its root is perennial, running to a great

Found wild by *Hastings*, in *Suffex*, plentifully. *Merr. Pin.*

In arenosis maris littoribus circa Angliam ubique fere. *Raii Syn.* We have not found it growing so generally as RAY describes.

On the sea-coast, in sandy or stony soils, but not common; on the shore by *Fast-Castle*, *Berwickshire*, Dr. PARSONS. *Lightf. Scot.*

At *Roosebeck*, in *Low-Furness*, *Lancashire*, Mr. WOODWARD: near *Megavissay*, *Cornwall*, Mr. WATT. *With Arr. ed. 2.*

^b Habitat ad littora oceani septentrionalis. *Linn. Sp. Pl.*

^c In Prof. MURRAY's *Syst. Veg.* the seed-vessel in the generic character is thus described, *Bacca sicca globosa decidua*;

a great depth, growing to a great thickness, and branching out widely, but not creeping, in the proper sense of that word, as PARKINSON, MILLER, and BRYANT, have described it^d: its full-grown leaves are large, equalling in size, when the plant grows luxuriantly, those of the largest cabbage, of a glaucous or

decidua; this in GMELIN's *Syst. Nat.* is altered to *Pericarpium simplex, globosum, deciduum, 2-articulatum*, some of the species having been found with two cells, as the *fruticosa*; but this plant not having the forked filament, *fig. 1.* so peculiar to this genus, Prof. MURRAY doubts whether it ought not to be regarded as a *Myagrum*, and thinks that both the genera might, with more propriety, be referred to the order *Siliculosa*, where every student would expect to find them.

^d If the main root, or any of its remoter branches, be divided into a number of pieces, each piece will grow if committed to the earth; and as it is impossible to dig about the widely extended roots of these plants without dividing many of them, and leaving a number of fragments in the earth; plants unavoidably arise from such, around the original, and give to it the appearance of having creeping roots; but though in fact they are not so, the multiplication of the plant by the necessary process of digging, renders it in some grounds a troublesome weed.

sea-green hue^c, and waved at the edges, thick and succulent in their wild state, dying away and disappearing entirely at the approach of winter^f. Seedling plants, if raised late in the spring, produce the first year radical leaves only, the second spring most of them throw up a flowering-stem, a foot or more in height, which expanding into numerous branches, forms a magnificent head of white, or cream-coloured flowers, having a honey-like fragrance; these, if the season prove favourable, are followed by abundance of seeds, which ripen about the end of August.

^e Authors describe a variety with jagged leaves, such we have not seen, but have frequently raised a green variety from seeds.

^f PARKINSON, perhaps, never committed a more egregious blunder, than in the account he has given of this part of the plant's œconomy: "the root" "is somewhat great, and shooteth forth many branches" "under ground, *keeping the green leaves all the winter.*" BRYANT in his *Fl. Diet.* misled perhaps by this account, says, *the radical leaves being green all the winter*, are cut by the inhabitants where the plants grow, and boiled as Cabbage, to which they prefer them.

As an article of food, the *Crambe maritima* appears to be better known here than in any other part of Europe, it is in this country only that its value is rightly appreciated, and its culture truly understood; but even here it is as yet far from being an object of general cultivation.

It would be very difficult to ascertain the precise period of its being first used with us ^{as} a culinary plant: on many parts of the sea-coast, especially of Devonshire, Dorsetshire, and Suffex, the inhabitants, for time immemorial, have been in the practice of procuring it for their tables, preferring it to all other greens; they seek for the plant in the spring where it grows spontaneously, and as soon as it appears above ground, they remove the pebbles or sand with which it is usually covered, to the depth of several inches, and cut off the young and tender leaves and stalks, as yet unexpanded and in a blanched state, close to the crown of the root, it is then in its greatest perfection; when the leaves are fully grown, they become hard and bitter,
and

and the plant is not eatable; the more curious, desirous of having it near at hand, and in their more immediate possession, have now in many of the maritime counties introduced it to their gardens, and in Devonshire particularly, almost every gentleman has a plantation of it for the use of his table; we have been informed that it has for many years been cultivated for sale in the neighbourhood of Bath; and my friend, Mr. WM. JONES, of Chelsea, tells me, that he saw bundles of it in a cultivated state exposed for sale in Chichester market, in the year 1753: I learn from different persons, that attempts have been made at various times to introduce it to the London markets, but ineffectually; a few years since, I renewed the attempt myself, and though it was not attended with all the success I could have wished, I flatter myself it has been the means of making the plant so generally known, that in future the markets of the first city in the world will be duly supplied with this most desirable article.

It is to be observed, that the Sea Kale
is

is delicate eating only when young, and that it is highly improved by being blanched; in the cultivation of this plant it becomes necessary therefore to blanch it before it is fit for the table; to effect this, it must be covered in some way or other, before the flowering-stem, which constitutes the chief eatable part, and its attendant leaves, shew the least sign of emerging from the crown of the root.

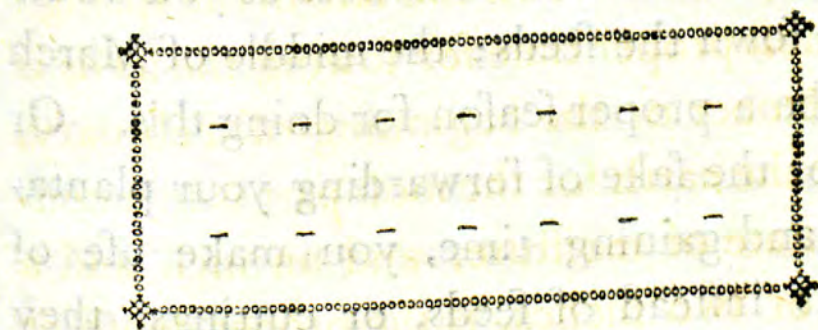
Cultivators differ widely in their mode of treating this plant: many conceiving that stones, or gravel, and sea-sand are essential to its growth, are at the expence of providing it with such, not aware that it will grow much more luxuriantly on a rich sandy loam, where the roots can penetrate to a great depth, without reaching the water, in which if they are immersed they are apt to rot; the plant will indeed succeed in almost any soil, provided it be dry; its luxuriance will depend chiefly on the manure with which the soil is enriched.

The most usual mode of raising the Sea Kale is from seed, it may also be raised from cuttings of the root, and that with the greatest certainty, but seedlings make the finest plants; some find a difficulty in making the seeds vegetate, this we attribute to their being old, buried too deeply in the earth, or sown too late in the spring; the most proper time for sowing the seeds is in October or the beginning of February, while the earth for the most part is in a constant state of moisture, and an inch and a half, or two inches, is the proper depth at which they should be buried; they rarely vegetate in less than six weeks, after being sown even in the most favourable seasons, and they are known sometimes to remain twelve months or more, without shewing any signs of it; should the season prove unusually dry, it will be necessary to water them as occasion may require.

It is the best practice to raise your plants immediately from seed, on the bed where they are intended to remain; by this means the plant receives no check to its growth.

When

When you have formed your bed, which should be raised somewhat above the level of the ground, and wide enough to hold two rows of plants abreast, the space between each plant in the row fourteen inches, and between each row a foot and a half;



sow about half a dozen seeds, as before directed, on each spot where your plant is intended to remain; this number is directed to guard against accidents, every seed may not vegetate, and some of those that do may be destroyed by the Turnep fly or Wireworm; should all of them succeed, they are easily reduced to a single plant, this reduction however need not be made too hastily; during summer your bed of course must be kept perfectly clear from weeds.—If, for the sake of a more certain crop, you are disposed to make
your

your plantation of the cuttings of the roots, you must take such as are of the size of the ring finger, and cut them into pieces of about two inches in length, burying each in an upright position about three inches under ground, in the same kind of bed and at the same distances as you would have sown the seeds; the middle of March will be a proper season for doing this. Or if, for the sake of forwarding your plantation and gaining time, you make use of plants instead of seeds, or cuttings, they should be those of a year old, properly trimmed, and transplanted with care; February and March will be also the most proper months for transplanting of these; if their flowering stalks be cut for food the same season, the plants will be liable to be weakened, and hence even in point of time there is little gained by using such, for most of the seedling plants in your bed, if they have been properly managed, as well as your plants from cuttings, will flower, and of course, be fit to cut the second year.

Early

Early in December cover your bed with a thick coat of rotten dung or leaves, this at the same time that it protects your plants from frost, will bring them forwarder, and add to their luxuriance; about the middle of February it will be necessary to cover your plants for blanching, the readiest mode of doing which is to draw the earth up with a hoe over the crown of the root, so that each plant shall be covered to the depth of ten or twelve inches; some blanch it by heaping on it sea-sand, some with small pebbles, some with coal ashes, and others with a large garden pot inverted, and placed immediately over the plant stopping up the hole at the bottom; and this last is perhaps the neatest and cleanest mode.

The finest or at least the largest Sea Kale, is that which is produced from seedling plants, the first year of their flowering, as the great produce of the plant then centers in one flowering stem; afterwards the crown of the root ramifying into many heads, a greater number of
stalks

stalks are produced, which are more slender but not less delicate.

When your plants have been covered a month, or six weeks, you must examine some of them, and if you find that the stalks have shot up three or four inches, you must begin cutting; should you wait till all the shoots are of a considerable length, your crop will come in too much at once; for in this plant there is not that succession of growth which there is in Asparagus, you may continue cutting till you see the head of flowers begin to form, and if at this time you uncover it entirely, and let it proceed to that state in which Brocoli is usually cut, and use it as such, you will find it an excellent substitute, and this greatly enhances the value of the plant, as Brocoli is liable to be entirely destroyed in severe weather, but this plant never. If your plants have been blanched by earthing them up, you may now level the earth of the beds.

Such as are partial to this plant and
possess

possess the means, may have it produced for a much longer period, by forcing the early crops, nothing more being necessary than to place over each plant a large garden pot, as in one of the modes of blanching already recommended, and cover the pots with long dung to a considerable thickness, the heat of the dung brings forward the plant, while the pot keeps it from coming in contact with the dung itself; and as the growth of the plant is by this means greatly accelerated; it is of course rendered more tender, as well as sweeter.

You may begin forcing this plant by the beginning of December, and at the same time that you use horse dung, which has a considerable degree of heat in it, for forcing some of your plants, you may cover over a part of your others with what the gardeners term mulsh, that kind of horse dung or litter which is little better than straw; this, if it only preserves the plants from cold, will greatly forward their growth; and thus, by a judicious application of forcing, you may have Sea Kale
in

in perfection from Christmas to Whitsun-
tide.

Such are the modes of treating this plant, which experience has sanctioned; but we apprehend much labour and expence may be saved by adopting a different mode of forcing it, especially when practised on a large scale, by bringing the plants fit for that purpose into a smaller compass, that is, by taking up at the approach of winter the roots of such plants as are sure to flower, cutting away their side branches, and shortening the root to the length of nine or twelve inches, and placing them at four or six inches asunder; they may be forced in a frame, or in any other way that the gardener's ingenuity shall suggest: as the plants thus used will be rendered of little or no value, care must be taken to have a regular succession of them for this purpose, should it be found to answer.

When the plant is blanched under a pot, it is fit for use as soon as it is cut;
but

but when blanched in any of the other modes, it requires to be carefully washed from any sand or grit which may adhere to it; and any blemish it may have received from subterraneous insects must be cut away.

In cutting this plant for the table, care must be taken not to injure the crown of the root by cutting it too close.

The sooner it is dressed after it is cut the better.

Twenty minutes boiling, in general, is sufficient to make it tender; this process is the more to be attended to, as the goodness of the article greatly depends on it; that which is young, recently cut, or forced, will be done in less time; when properly boiled, it is to be served up to table on a toast with melted butter, in the manner of Asparagus; we have been assured that it is most excellent stewed, and it seems well adapted for a pickle.

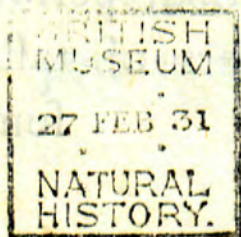
As to its excellence as a food, persons differ, as they do in all matters of taste,

some preferring it even to Asparagus, to which it is related, in point of flavour, others regarding it as little superior to Cabbage; the general voice, as far as we have been able to collect it, is very much in its favour.

In its sensible effects on the human body, it comes nearer to the Cabbage tribe than Asparagus; it does not impart to the urine that unpleasant smell, which the latter is well known to do.

The Author of these Directions is not so opinionated as to suppose, that they will not in many points admit of improvement, and he will thankfully receive any information that may tend thereto, from any quarter.

Such as may have experienced any difficulty in procuring fresh seeds of this plant, may be supplied with such at the Botanic Nursery, Queen's-Elm, Brompton, or with plants, such having been long cultivated there.



F I N I S.