

By GEORGE ROBERTSON, M.D.

Just looking at the bare garden plot in the middle of winter brought a feeling of sadness. It's seemed like such a waste of time and resources to see it idle -- unproductive, naked to the rain and sun.

One year my wife insisted on a cover crop and chose Harry Vetch which really took off just when it was time to clear it off for the spring planting. It seems as if I nearly tore up my tiller and irrigation pipes getting the tangled greenery off of the garden spot.

So the next year after noticing the potatoes in the garage growing long shoots, I decided to go ahead and plant them even though it was Feb. 15

You will remember that we had several snows last year and the temperature was below freezing many days after I had put the seed potatoes in the ground. Well it didn't seem to make any difference to the plants because as soon as it warmed up a bit, I started seeing little green shoots and leaves in the garden rows. We wound up digging the spuds with plenty of time afterward to grow another summer crop behind them.

So this year when the potatoes we hadn't eaten yet started growing shoots beginning as early as November, I began to wonder if I could go ahead and plant them. The shoots got longer and longer and finally I decided Jan. 22 to put them in the ground which was still a little wet from the last heavy rains.

Trying to work up the earth was too tiring and frustrating since the moles had made tunnels all through my beds, so I finally knocked off some of the grass and took a rod and made a hole to bury the seed potatoes in. I promised myself I'd come back later to finish cleaning off the ground when the weather was warmer. This no-till farming is definitely easier.

It's just been a few days since my experiment started but already the shoots, some of which I

Experiment: Is it ever too early to plant Irish potatoes?

Friday, February 3, 2012

left above ground, have started to green up. I'll let you know in the spring how the crop is coming along, or better yet, invite you over for some French fries fresh from the new potato patch.

Editor's Note: George Robertson is a physician with Family Medical Associates, PC, in Lebanon.