

use, for diluting a compost heap in order to make it possible to apply a light compost dressing over an extensive area, and possibly for numerous other purposes peat of good quality may have a considerable value. There are peat deposits, however, that because of infiltration with bog iron or other materials may be actually injurious to plants. In using any peat deposit, therefore, it is important to learn something of that particular deposit. It is doubtful if the use of peat on clay soils, either as a top-dressing or as a mixture in an effort to improve the physical condition of the surface, is ever advantageous.



A compost and soil sifting machine which was tried out during the season of 1924. It is claimed that this machine in one case screened more top soil at a labor cost of \$15.50 than was screened through a rotary screen by 5 men over a period of 3 weeks, at a labor cost of \$455.

## Destroying Pocket Gophers

By W. B. Bell, U. S. Biological Survey

Pocket gophers are readily caught in any one of several makes of special traps commonly on the market, and a few traps will be all that are necessary to keep small areas free of these pests. For larger areas, such as fairways, a very successful and much more practical method is to poison the rodents by use of baits of vegetables or grain. Either the vegetable or the grain bait gives splendid results, but some gophers will not eat a poison bait, and these individuals must be trapped.

The following formulas for preparing poison baits have been developed by the Biological Survey of the Department of Agriculture and have been found to be very effective:

For a vegetable bait, cut carrots, sweet potatoes, or parsnips about 2 inches long and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch square, and wash and drain the cuttings. From a pepper box sift slowly a mixture of  $\frac{1}{8}$  ounce of powdered strychnine alkaloid and  $\frac{1}{10}$  ounce of saccharin over about 4 quarts of the dampened baits, stirring the baits to distribute the poison evenly.