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Currant and Gooseberry Culture*

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THE production of currants and gooseberries in Ontario is increasing in importance year by year, and now there is a large acreage in cultivation. It was not many years ago when growers were pulling out whole patches of red and black currants because the demand for the fruit was so poor as to cause prices to be unprofitable. Black currants sold as low as sixty cents for a twenty-pound basket, while red currants could not be sold at any price.

Conditions have changed considerably during the past thirteen years. Prices have gradually advanced until now we can obtain as high as ten and one-half cents a pound wholesale for black currants and around six and one-half cents for the red varieties.

On the other hand the price of labor has increased. Twenty cents used to be paid for picking a twenty-pound basket of black currants, while now thirty-five and forty cents is the prevailing price for an eleven-quart basket.

The increase in the prices of these fruits is due to the large number of jam factories which have been erected throughout the province. Black currants cannot be sold readily on a fruit market at such high prices to individual householders, but these same people will buy the jammed article and in the end pay more for it, as they pay also for the cost of manufacturing.

The western provinces are demanding more every year and quite a quantity of the fresh fruits are shipped out there. The care of the black and red varieties is very similar, the only essential difference being in methods of pruning.

SOIL AND LOCATION

Patches planted in the northern parts of Ontario would be better on a north slope. The sun's rays would not be so strong in the early spring, and consequently there would not be the same damage from forcing the buds early and having them injured by a late spring frost.

Black currants will grow on almost any soil, but for the best growth should be planted on a rich, clayey loam which is well drained and retentive. The soil must be well drained to allow early cultivation in the spring and must be retentive to conserve sufficient moisture to swell out the fruit. Usually about the

period when the berries are growing most rapidly, there is a dry spell, and we must have a soil which will tide the crops over this trying period.

Red currants require a soil of a lighter nature for best success. A rich, sandy loam, which is also well drained and retentive, has been found to be the best.

PROPAGATION

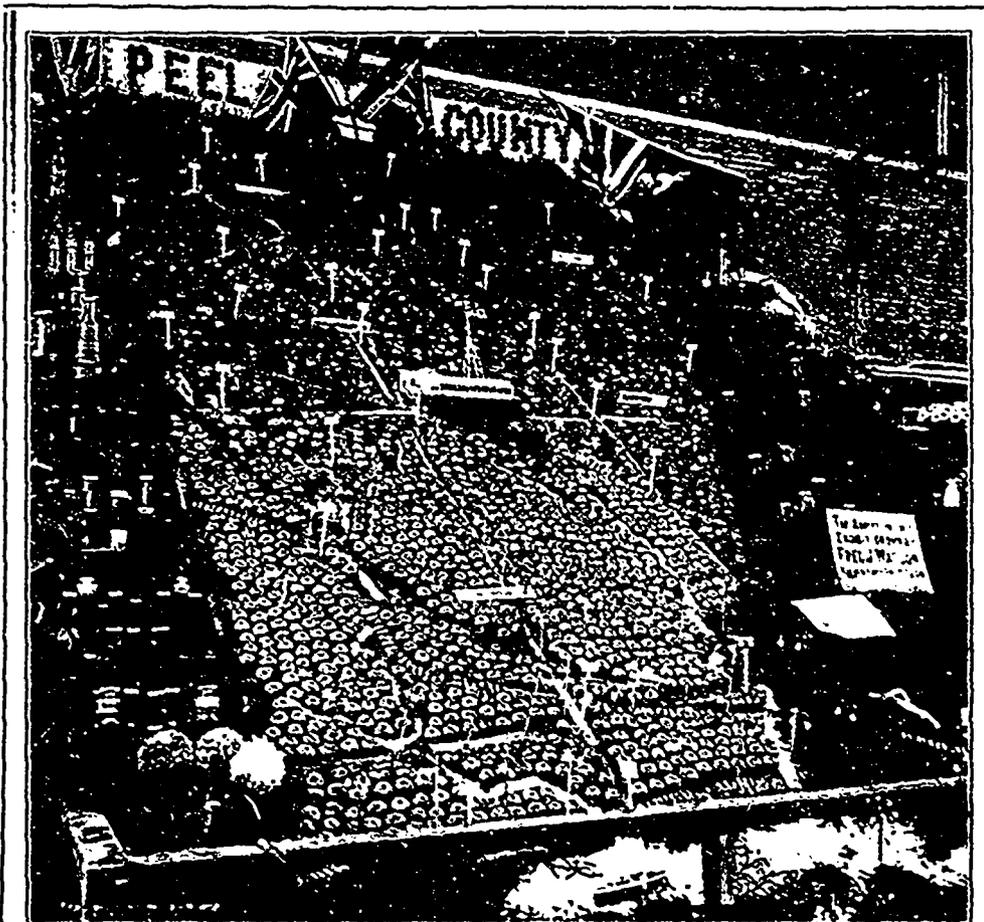
Both classes are almost entirely propagated from cuttings which are made from the present year's growth. These are made about eight inches long and trimmed off at the base of a bud, at which point the callousing process is the most rapid.

Cuttings may be made early in the fall as soon as the wood is ripe and planted immediately in nursery rows. If the fall is favorable they will root and be ready for growth the following spring. They should be covered with straw or strawy manure to prevent heaving by frost and

also to hold back growth a little in the spring. If this is not done the leaves will come out rapidly and use up all the stored food in the cutting before the roots have become active. Cuttings may also be made in the winter and stored in old sawdust or a mixture of sawdust and sand. Making them in the spring and planting them out directly is sometimes tried with indifferent success. From my experience cuttings made in the winter and stored in sawdust until planting out time have made much better growth than those made by any other method.

SELECTION OF PLANTS

Select plants which have a large fibrous root system and a thrifty looking top. A good two-year-old is superior to a one-year-old, because they have a larger root system. However, one-year-old culls are usually planted again and sold as two-year-old number one, and I prefer the one-year-olds for that rea-



A Novel Exhibit Made by Peel County at the Recent Ontario Horticultural Exhibition
Note how in this exhibit of apples made in the form of a map of the county of Peel, the townships, power lines, railroads and other features of the county are shown.

*Extract from a paper read at the recent annual convention in Toronto of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association.