

BLACKBERRY CULTURE.

The home of the blackberry is in a deep sandy soil, not over-rich, the climate cool and moist rather than hot and dry. In such a soil the roots are safe from the influences of the weather, as they penetrate deep, the water in a wet season passing off readily, and the heat and drouth not reaching them to seriously affect them, unless unusually severe, then only checking the growth and shrinking the berries. Thickly mulching the ground in such case is a great help, using some vegetable material, like muck or leaf mold, which, worked afterward into the soil, is of great benefit. Partial shade from shrubs, or occasional trees, or other means of preventing the direct heat of the sun, is an advantage in our drouthy climate. Better still is a northern inclination of the ground, as it favors moisture and secures a more uniform temperature, having also the whole benefit of the soil. The only danger would be from a great growth of stalk in a moist, growing season, the wood not sufficiently maturing to withstand the cold of winter, especially if severe. This is readily avoided by pinching off with thumb and finger, the tips of the canes, which is best done when a height of three feet or more has been reached, depending upon the thickness of the stalk, as stockiness is required to sustain the weight of the fruit, thus dispensing with stakes for support. This diverts the growth into the side shoots or arms, which in like manner must be stopped when the proper length has been reached, which may vary from fifteen to eighteen inches. These laterals make an unequal growth, some reaching the proper length for stopping sooner than others; hence frequent attention is required, so that no unnecessary loss of wood results from excess of growth. If any are tardy and threaten to make too late a growth to stand the

winter, pinch them back whatever their length to give the wood a chance to harden. In this way the whole plant becomes fortified against the cold and is the better able from its increased stockiness and shortening of length to bear its fruit, the size and quality of which will also be improved. In this operation there is nothing rash, the plant receives no shock from severe pruning; only the direction of growth is somewhat changed, favoring the parts that most need it—the laterals, which bear the fruit.

One of the faults in blackberry culture is an excess of growth or too high manuring, favoring a tendency to produce stalk and leaf growth at the expense of fruit. But while less push is required for the canes, more is demanded to round out the growing crop of fruit, the two principles, unfortunately, being in antagonism. The only course is the medium, which produces a good cane and a fair to good crop of fruit, the lack to be made up by planting closer, which the lesser growth will allow. Rank manure should be discarded, stirring lightly the surface of the ground and mulching with fine vegetable material to be finally worked into the soil, is better treatment—well-rotted stable manure, if needed, preceding the mulch. The time for applying the manure is after the fruit is set, or at the blossoming period, or, if the soil is quite poor, earlier still, which will push the canes, that can then bear it, and improve the fruit. The manure mostly exhausted, the canes will grow more leisurely and slowly, thus getting a chance to ripen their wood and favor the formation of fruit buds. Treated in this way the largest and finest berries and greatest and most profitable crops are grown. Otherwise, with the too general treatment, the berry will be small and seedy, and lacking in flavor. The excellence of the blackberry, as of other berries,