

# Harvesting and Marketing Strawberries

**M**ANY fruit growers who can produce excellent crops do not make as much profit as they should because of improper methods of harvesting and marketing. Some growers are careless, others do not know. With strawberries this lack of care and want of business methods is most disastrous. The sooner strawberry growers dismiss the idea that a gang of pickers, consisting chiefly of boys and girls with little or no experience, can attend to the harvesting the sooner will higher prices be obtained for their fruit. Personal supervision by those who understand the stage of maturity at which the fruit should be picked to reach the market that is being catered to, in proper condition, is essential.

The consuming public is constantly becoming more critical and a fruit of high quality is demanded. Growers who put up uniformly good fruit can find a ready market at all times and obtain the highest prices. If strict care is taken to see that the fruit is graded and the boxes filled and placed on the market in satisfactory condition, no worry will be caused because of low prices. To ensure that he shall receive due credit for the extra care, the grower should have his name or his brand or both clearly stamped on the box.

The method of disposing of the fruit will be regulated largely by existing conditions. If satisfactory help can be secured and a city is not too far distant it may pay best to make direct sales. If, however, transportation facilities are good and help is scarce the most advisable method of disposing of it would be through a commission house. The price obtained from the commission merchants may not at first be as high, but once a reputation for supplying high grade goods is established the price will be raised.

In a recent letter to THE HORTICULTURIST, Mr. W. G. Horn, a successful strawberry grower of Clarkson, Ont., wrote as follows:

"In gathering the strawberry crop all growers have to contend with more or less trouble in getting them picked properly. I believe I am within the mark in saying 25 per cent. of the strawberry crop is picked in a premature state on account of the pickers being more anxious to fill the boxes than to pick the berries properly. To have the berries at their best they should be picked every third day.

"In disposing of them we like to get them off our hands as quickly as possible on account of their perishable nature, and to have them looking as fresh as possible when placed on the market. We depend largely on the commission merchant for handling what we produce. Sometimes buyers are at the stations and buy them there for cash. It is

almost impossible for the growers to market their strawberries individually.

## SUMMER CULTIVATION

"It is difficult to have land on which strawberries are grown in too high a state of cultivation. Then it is important to keep the patch well cultivated and free from weeds before the runners make a start. The runners should not be allowed to become too thick in the rows or the rows to become too wide. A row 18 inches wide with strong, vigorous plants is the ideal one.

"If the patch has been a good one the first year, and the plants are vigorous, we keep it over almost invariably and occasionally a third year, but very seldom. The treatment for the same is to clean it thoroughly from weeds and mulch it with short, well-rotted manure during the winter. Long manure answers better on the new patch."

## NOVA SCOTIA METHODS

In discussing strawberry growing in its different phases before the students at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Mr. J. C. Black, of Truro, one of the most successful strawberry culturists in Canada, dealt with the harvesting and marketing end. His address was in part as follows:

"I am a strong believer in intensive farming. There is no crop that will respond better to intensive cultivation than the strawberry. Those who are better acquainted with the productiveness of potatoes than they are of strawberries may be somewhat surprised to hear that an acre of land will produce as many bushels of strawberries as it will potatoes. I have grown 9,000 quarts per acre. The average, however, ranges from 3,000 to 6,000 quarts. The difference results from the condition of the land and the amount of attention given to the crop during the first season. Strawberries have been grown in many places to far exceed the above figures.

"In old land that is more or less over-run with grass or weeds it does not pay to keep the patch for a second crop, but on land that is clean a second crop may be gathered. As soon as the crop is harvested the land should be plowed and everything turned under and some crop put in to be plowed down in the fall. If the matted row system is adopted a new patch should be set out every spring and the old one plowed down.

"In harvesting the crop we pay, by the box, from one to two cents according to the state of the crop, and always try to get the most careful pickers. Sometimes one careless picker destroys more than he is worth.

"In marketing your fruit bear in mind that the market is never glutted with a good article. It is always the inferior fruit that spoils sales. If you

have the best fruit and let people know it you can always get the highest prices and secure the best class of customers. Be sure always to have the best. It is a good plan to have your name stamped on the boxes. Do not use old and soiled boxes; let the other fellow have them. Insist on the pickers filling the boxes. Nothing disgusts a customer more than to see a dirty box only two-thirds full of half-ripe fruit or soft and mussy looking.

"There is no cause for alarm about a market for a first-class fruit properly picked and boxed. The more good strawberries people eat the more they want. If the local demand is not likely to be great enough you can always find some other town that is not supplied. If large enough quantities can be grown in any locality to make the venture worth while there is no reason why they may not be shipped to Montreal or even to Boston, as strawberries are scarce in those markets when our fruit is in its prime."

## No Non-Suckering Raspberry

Do you know of a red raspberry that is a tip plant—one that will not sucker? I know the Columbian, but I refer to varieties producing red berries.—John Deegan, Meaford

There is no good non-suckering red raspberry known to me. The tip varieties are either black or purple, the latter being hybrids between the red raspberry and blackcap.—W. T. Macoun, Horticulturist, C.E.F., Ottawa.

There is no red raspberry that roots at the tip. They all sucker more or less. The only garden raspberries that root at the tip are the blackcaps and hybrids between the reds and the blackcaps, like Schaeffer, Columbian, etc.—R. B. Whyte, Ottawa.

"I always apply fertilizer to the small fruit plantation in the spring. I use muriate of potash on my grapes because it stimulates fruit growth. Currants do not need so much potash. Nitrate of soda and barnyard manure give best results."—A. W. Peart, Burlington.

Russetting of the fruit is frequently caused in the early part of the season by two or three fine days following the spraying and then a rain coming. When the fruit becomes more mature no harm results.—N. Jack, Chateauguay Basin, Que.

Do not stir the soil under or about gooseberries, currants and Shaffer and Columbia raspberries. The former will drop their fruit, and the berries will fall off in yield if the soil is stirred. Mulch gives a full crop every time.—Stanley Spillett, Nantyr, Ont.