

Herb Vagaries.

By Anna L. Jack.

It is interesting to recall the vast importance that our grandmothers for several generations were accustomed to give to the herb garden, and the quaint sayings that surrounded these culinary adjuncts to the winter stores. Even though the good George Herbert shut them out from his kitchen as "vanities," they had a place in cottage or castle for their culture. Even in the monastery, the inmates were given a "knowledge of all salads and pot herbs whatsoever." Here were grown not only sage and thyme, mint and savory, parsley and fennel, coriander and dill, but many other herbs now fallen into disuse. First in the gardens of to-day for its fragrance and uses is the Labiate family, of which the mint and thyme and sage are best known for their volatile oils held in the foliage. Even in mid-winter one remembers the pleasant refreshment of brushing past a bed of either peppermint or spearmint. Of the latter Gerard wrote, "The smells rejoyceth the heart of man." It is said to be strengthening to the memory, and good for many maladies. But in these days it often goes by the name of fish mint, and is the basis of mint sauce. Sage is equally used, and possesses many virtues, besides being a staple in the kitchen. While savory was taken into Britain by the Romans and called "pudding grass," because it was used to stuff meats, and the compounds made of an animal's interior, as sausage meat, etc.

Thyme was believed to strengthen the lungs, and to avert melancholy. It is said to have made the bed in the stable at Bethlehem, but by what authority it is not easy to trace.

The old saying, "Sowing fennel is sowing sorrow," and also, "Where rosemary flourishes the lady rules," are well known, and Shakespeare recognized in many ways the uses and peculiarities of herbs. Even wormwood, that is still largely used, and taken in France under the name of absinthe, is commented on where he says:

"Thy sugared tongue, to bitter wormwood taste."

It is interesting to know that there is a species of this plant found in old-fashioned gardens, and known by the peculiar name of "old man," or "Southernwood"; its only use being for its aromatic and rather pungent fragrance. What could we do without the parsley? It was of parsley wreaths were twined for the victors in the Nemean games, but in some way it fell into disfavor, probably because it became the custom for the Greeks to strew parsley upon new-made graves. In these days it is chiefly used to garnish a dish, or give its pleasant flavor to soup.

Along the fence of a field, where fifty years ago was an old garden, there still grows clumps of caraway, and as its white clusters turn to seed, the neighbors come from far and near to gather it, so tenacious of life and persistent in growth is this plant. It is an ancient herb, and keeps, too, its Arabic name, "Al. Karweya," while it is much valued in oriental cookery, as well as by the Germans, who use it in certain kinds of bread. Apples and carraways made a distinct course in banquets of the middle ages, and Shakespeare has Justice Shallow say:

"We will eat a last year's pippin of my own grafting, with a dish of carraway."

It is not easy to tell in a short article of the many plants to which virtues have been ascribed. Even the spring anemone was considered by the Romans as a remedy against disease when gathered and worn—and a later writer says:

"The first spring-blown anemone, she in his doublet wove,
To keep him safe from pestilence, wherever he should rove."

And we all know the fragrant lavender, and the highly-scented musk. So the vagaries of herbs have been noted in all generations, from the time even of the titling of "mint, anise and cummin." And in each of these savory products of the soil there is doubtless a soothing and a healing virtue, but imperfectly understood or appreciated.

Judged on Its Merits.

Find enclosed my subscription for 1905. I consider the "Farmer's Advocate" the best paper in its line. I taught school for eight years, and I find your paper far superior in its line to all the best educational papers and magazines published in this country; therefore I say the "Farmer's Advocate" is the best paper, in its line, viz., the line of agriculture. Wishing you the best of success, and asking you to continue my paper.
HENRY J. MANSZ.
Oxford Co., Ont.

Popular in New Ontario.

You will find enclosed \$1.50 to extend my subscription to your valuable paper. The "Farmer's Advocate" is highly appreciated up here in the District of Temiscaming. Everybody who reads it here declares it to be the best farmer's weekly that he has read.
N. W. EDWARDS.

Home Culture of Strawberries.

Almost everyone likes strawberries, but it is remarkable to note how very few persons favorably situated, enjoy the luxury of a strawberry bed of their own. Some have tried the experiment, but possessing no common-sense knowledge of the undertaking, have lost patience over poor results, and thrown up the project in disgust. Like "Barkis," they are "willin'," but haven't the faintest idea how to go to work about it. It is neither an intricate nor costly enterprise.

If possible, select a spot for your prospective strawberry bed the previous fall. The richer it is to begin with, the less one's subsequent labor. The ground should be spaded and spread with a liberal layer of barnyard fertilizer; then re-spaded and raked smooth, for winter snows to exercise their beneficial action.



Strawberry Blossoms—1, Perfect; 2, Imperfect.

In May, when warm, spring rains have mellowed the ground, set out your plants, previously ordered from some reliable seedsman. One hundred plants constitute a fair-sized strawberry bed, at an average cost of a dollar and a half.

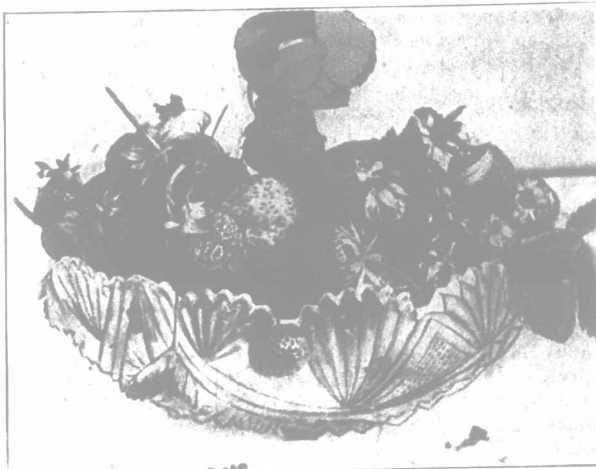
Now occurs a slight divergence of ways and methods, according as one wishes—a "matted" strawberry bed, or one where the plants are hilled in distinct rows. For general purposes, the former method is largely approved. The "hilled" beds may present a more uniform and neat appearance, but each individual plant



Illustrating Proper Method of Setting Strawberry Plants.—No. 1, Roots Not Spread Out; No. 2, Planted too Shallow; No. 3, Properly Set.

requires mulching, else the berries will be gritty; the runners demand constant cutting, and for some unaccountable reason, grubs make more frequent and deadly attacks on the "hilled" beds than on the "matted ones." All things considered, a greater yield, with less attendant labor, accrues from the "matted" bed.

In this case, the plants should be set about a foot apart, the roots well straightened and spread in the hole; then filled in with earth, watered thoroughly, and the surface covered with well-rotted manure. Great



Fresh-picked and Inviting.

care should be taken that the crown of the plant is not so high that the roots are exposed to the air, nor yet so deeply sunk that it is covered with earth; either condition is deleterious.

During the first summer, some of the more ambitious plants will attempt to blossom weakly. It is best not to allow this. Nip off all aspiring buds, that the whole strength may be reserved for the great bearing effort of the following year.

Before the first snowfall cover the bed with a blanket of fir boughs. In the spring weed carefully, and spread with a dressing of hardwood ashes, followed in about two weeks by a light application of phosphate.

Plants that are not too close together, and well weeded, sometimes bear the third year, but it is better economy to set out a fresh bed with the young runners, which have rooted themselves on all sides of the parent plants. After the start, by keeping a bed ahead, so to speak, one can enjoy strawberries in luxuriance each succeeding summer.

Opposite the strawberry descriptions in the catalogue, often appears the letter "(P)"—pistillate.

Sometimes a variety is designated by "(B)"—bi-sexual. This plays an important part in the proper selection of plants and their consequent bearing results.

Bi-sexual or perfect varieties (the names are synonymous) produce flowers which contain both stamens and pistils. They are self-fertilizing, and can bear independently of the pistillate varieties, though a greater yield is forthcoming where every third row contains pistillate plants.

Pistillate, or imperfect plants, produce flowers which contain pistils only. They are lavish bearers when properly pollinated by perfect varieties, but when planted by themselves they produce literally "nothing but leaves."

A friend of the writer, ignorant of this important detail, bought a quantity of plants of Haverland, a pistillate variety, which is prolific and satisfactory under proper conditions. The soil was rich; the plants grew well, and blossomed profusely. They continued to grow till they stood knee-high, but not a berry crowned their maturity.

Subsequently, this same gentleman, having discovered his mistake, again had a bed of Haverland strawberries; this time in conjunction with some staminate plants. Again, the soil was rich, the season favorable in every particular. From about 1-16 of an acre of ground he picked, during the bearing year, 16 or 12 bushels of strawberries, while half as many more rotted on the vines, despite all efforts to keep pace with the supply. Picking grew from a wonder, a delight, to a tantalization.

The different varieties of strawberries possess certain distinctive features in flavor, color and shape. Some are brightest vermillion; others rich wine-red, almost garnet; others, still, are pale flesh-pink, so faintly washed with red that they present a somewhat bleached appearance, which belies their delicious flavor.

Among early varieties, the Haverland proves very satisfactory in combination with such staminate varieties as the Wilson and Downing, which bloom at the same time, as it is important they should.

The Wilson is a firm berry, rich and dark in color, and pleasantly tart.

The Downing, though not large, is very sweet and pleasant to the taste. Its chief value lies in its earliness and fine flavor.

The Sharpless attains an enormous size, but is not very firm or regular in shape, being better for immediate use than for canning purposes.

Howard's No. 41 is a satisfactory late variety, medium color, good size and regular shape. It is a pretty berry, with bright, straw-colored seeds showing conspicuously all over it.

Bubach's No. 5, Nick Ohmer, Marshall and Brandywine are also familiar names on the strawberry grower's list of favorites. It must be remembered that the growth of strawberries differs somewhat on different soil.

To the general run of people, "strawberries" signifies merely the flaccid imitations, slowly sagging in their boxes on market garden carts, or along city thoroughfares; a "far cry" from the strawberries which gleam sparkling red beneath their covert of leaves on one's own strawberry bed. Something subtly delicious and indefinable, lurking in the flavor of these freshly-picked berries, disappears, never to return, after they have been shipped or remain standing for a number of hours.

It is a luxury to be able to pick a handful, a bowlful or ten quarts of mellow, sun-warmed strawberries when and as you wish. It is no less a luxury to be able to give away luscious samples to one's friends.

Brome Co., Que.

M. SPAFFORD.

The Fruit Trade with Ontario.

Last summer, it will be remembered, Prof. Reynolds, of the Ontario Agricultural College, experimented with two carloads of tender fruits, to determine the nature of the objections to shipping larger consignments of Ontario fruit to the Northwest. At the time of the experiment the "Farmer's Advocate" gave a description of the experiment and quoted the prices realized, which, by the way, were quite satisfactory, both to the Ontario shipper and the Western buyer. Recently, however, Prof. Reynolds has issued a bulletin based upon his experiment, in which he cites the objections of shipping fruit to the West, and shows that all may be obviated or removed. With fruit properly handled (the art of doing which the growers are rapidly learning), careful icing of refrigerator cars, and a reasonably fast freight service, the Professor asserts that peaches, pears, grapes, plums, berries, etc., can be landed in Winnipeg in first-class condition in from six to seven days from date of picking, and that these fruits when kept at refrigerator temperatures will remain fresh for from sixteen to thirty-six days. As in so many other things, the freight service is the most serious interference with the shipment of fruits from the East, but with a railway commission, having the interests of both the producer and consumer at heart, this difficulty should easily be remedied, providing sufficient pressure is brought to bear by all parties interested in the trade. The Ontario Fruit-growers' Association have pressed their case before the commission, and it is hoped that the promised redress will be operative before the 1905 crop is ready to ship.