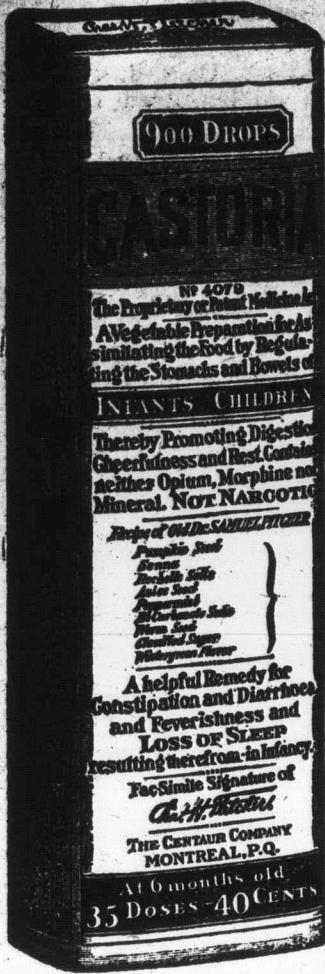




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GROWING SMALL FRUITS

Practical Hints for Both Farmers and Townsfolk.

Currents and Raspberries Worth While Raising — Strawberries Yield Generously Where Properly Cared For—Systems of Planting Described.

(Contributed by Ontario Department of Agriculture, Toronto.)

As the small fruits are to remain in the garden for a longer period of time than the vegetable crops it is better, as a matter of convenience, to place them on one side of the garden where they will be least interfered with and where they will not hinder the ploughing for the other crops.

The best time to set out nearly all kinds of fruit, in this province, is early in May, the date depending upon the soil and weather conditions. Currants and gooseberries are exceptions to this rule, it being generally best to plant them in September, as they begin growth very early in spring.

Currants.

Red and black currants are native and grow over a wide range of territory in Canada. They are planted four to six feet apart, as the bushes take up considerable space after three or four years. Plant in the autumn. The currant roots are near the surface, hence if the soil is hot and dry the crop will suffer. A rich, well-drained, clay loam is best, although they do well in most soils. A good dressing of manure before planting, well worked into the soil, will make conditions better. There is little danger of giving the currant too much fertilizer. Keep from six to eight main branches each season and a few others coming on to take their places. A good rule is not to have any branches more than three years of age, as younger wood gives stronger growth and better fruit. In good soil the bushes should bear from six to ten crops before removal and before new ones take their place. In a favorable season, when in full bearing, they should yield from four to ten pounds per bush.

Raspberries.

Red raspberries are generally planted in rows six feet apart and two feet in the row. The numerous shoots or suckers which spring up from the roots soon make the space between the rows narrow, so with rows a few feet apart a considerable number of canes must be cut out to permit of cultivation. These suckers may be dug and set out in new rows. A cool, loamy soil, well drained, yet capable of holding much moisture, is best. As moisture is a very important factor in producing a good crop, and is often lacking during the fruiting period, frequent shallow cultivations should be given to keep the soil in moist condition and also keep down the weeds. After a cane bears fruit it is of no more use, and so may be cut out immediately. Of the other canes, take out the weak ones and leave about six good canes to bear the fruit for the next season. Cut them back late in the fall after growth ceases, or early in the spring, to two or two and a half feet in height. The best varieties are Cuthbert and Herbert.

Strawberries.

The strawberry is a very hardy plant and will grow on a variety of soils. A sandy loam produces the earliest crop, while a clay loam produces the largest crop and a better quality berry. Probably the best system of planting in the garden is to set the plants 18 inches apart in the rows, which should be from 3-4 feet apart, and allow the runners to extend in all directions to form a matted row. This method will give the greatest quantity of berries; while, if they were planted closer and all the runners cut off, a larger plant and larger berries could be produced, but would take considerable time and care. Spring planting in May gives the best results. Strawberries will not thrive where water stands on the surface in either summer or winter. It may be possible to obtain plants from a plantation near-by; if not, order early from a reliable nurseryman. When digging take the healthiest runner plants and see that all large leaves and flower buds are removed before planting. More than one variety should be planted, because many varieties are imperfect, that is, contain pistil parts only, while some, when the pistil and stamens are in one flower, are perfect. The imperfect varieties must have pollen from the perfect flower in order to set fruit. Generally the best results are obtained where just one crop is taken; that is, at the end of the second season from planting, plough them under, and reset a new lot each year. Most plantations are allowed to run longer—three or four seasons. In the fall, after the plants have frozen, they should be covered with straw, hay, or what is still better, spruce or fir boughs. This prevents alternate freezing and thawing. In the spring, after the danger from frost is past, the hay or straw is drawn off the plants and placed between the rows to serve as a mulch to conserve moisture, keep the berries clean and make picking easier. In small gardens plants may be set twelve inches apart in the row. No runners are allowed to form on the plants. This is what is called the "Hill" system and gives very fine quality berries. Only varieties with perfect flowers should be used. The only objection to this method of strawberry growing is the amount of labor required to pull off the runners. —A. H. MacLennan, Vegetable Specialist, Toronto.

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