

# The Planting of Strawberries

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Any good garden soil will grow good strawberries, but the selection of varieties is of the greatest importance, and a chance selection is more than likely to end in failure. The soil best suited for the strawberry, that is, the soil that will grow successfully the largest number of varieties, is a deep, rich sandy loam. A light sand or heavy clay may, with very little expense, be brought into a condition that will produce abundant crops. Some varieties thrive best in a soil in which clay predominates, while others do best in a light, rich, sandy soil. A deep soil, whether it be naturally light or heavy, is one of the requisites demanded by the strawberry. If the soil is naturally wet, it will require under-draining.

The preparation of the soil is of the utmost importance. In digging, care should be taken to go to the full depth of the spade or fork, throwing the soil ahead six or eight inches. See that it is thoroughly pulverized, and every lump broken up, as the roots of a plant cannot penetrate a hard lump of soil. The better the soil is broken up, the better the chance for the root. Then, also, if the soil is lumpy it cannot retain moisture and the plants suffer, whereas if the soil has been thoroughly broken up it will remain moist even through a very considerable drought.

## PREPARATION OF THE BEDS

In preparing my beds, I dig them twice. The manure is dug in the first time and in the second digging I make sure that there are no lumps of either manure or soil, and endeavour to more thoroughly incorporate the manure with the soil than is possible with one digging. The second digging is not labor lost; it is, in my mind, absolutely necessary if the best results are expected.

The manure should be well rotted. If not, great difficulty will be experienced in keeping down weeds and grass, and, besides this, the straw in fresh or half-rotted manure, when dug or plowed in, is one of the greatest causes of failure. It does not rot for some time after being placed in the soil, and as it holds the soil particles apart, the hot dry air penetrates deeply soon drying it out to the detriment or probable loss of many plants. The question of soil preparation is old, and to some it may seem quite unnecessary to mention it at all, but one sees on every side, every spring, people digging or plowing strawy manure, fresh or half rotted, into a lumpy soil, and, therefore, I feel that I should mention it. In a wet season the ill-effects of straw in the soil are of course

less noticeable, but as the average growing season is dry, the safer plan is to use only well rotted manure.

## FERTILIZERS

As a rule, unless the soil is very poor, or very rich, a dressing of about three inches of well rotted manure plowed or dug in, and a moderate application of bone meal, harrowed or raked in, is sufficient fertilizer in the spring before planting. Later on, in the early fall, a good top dressing of hardwood ashes is most valuable. The manure furnishes humus, nitrogen and some potash; the bone supplies nitrogen and phosphoric acid; and the ashes potash, phosphoric acid and lime. Beds supplied with this top-dressing of ashes, produce fruits of the finest possible flavor and color. If ashes are not procurable, muriate of potash may be used.

## HOW TO PLANT

The situation of a strawberry bed should be open and airy; they will not tolerate shade. Early spring is the usual time of planting and for commercial growers it is undoubtedly the only time; but for the man who grows for his own use and incidentally for exhibition, and who wishes to obtain the greatest amount of the finest fruit, with the least amount of labor, the annual system is the best.

There are three methods of culture, the matted row, the narrow row and the annual system. The first mentioned is for commercial growers only, and need not be dealt with here. The narrow row system is as follows: The plants are set out in rows thirty to thirty-six inches apart, with the plants twelve to eighteen inches apart in the row. They should be well cultivated, and the top inch or so

of soil kept loose right up to the plant, in order to conserve the moisture in the soil. When the plants have become well established in June or early in July, three or four runners from each plant are placed carefully about six inches from the centre of the row on each side, and between the plants in the row. Two plants only are allowed to each runner, care being taken that they don't crowd each other, four to six inches apart being about right. It is good policy when possible to assist these little plants to take root.

As soon as the small white rootlets are visible, they should be placed where they are to be left, and kept in place by a small stone or a little earth. When the row has been formed, it is advisable to religiously keep off all runners. It pays to do it. The energy of the plant is thereby turned in another direction, that of forming new crowns and fruiting buds. Thorough cultivation and hand hoeing around each plant all summer is imperative. The best time to annihilate weeds is when they are so small as to be invisible. The constant stirring of the surface of the soil will accomplish this, and the time necessary to do it is very small compared with what would be required were the weeds to get a start. If they get a start their removal from the ground disturbs the plants, keeping them back; and besides valuable nourishment has been taken away by the weeds, all of which is needed for the plants.

We have found motor goggles a great help in protecting the eyes from the spraying solution while spraying trees. —Alfred Chaplin, Golden Acres, Rougemont, Que.



Failwaters, planted Twelve Years in the Orchard of W. H. Gibson, Newcastle, Ont. Promise of Second Good Crop.

\*Extract from an address delivered at the last annual meeting of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association.