

# The Strawberry and Its Culture\*

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THE strawberry is more cosmopolitan in its adaptation to soil, climate and conditions, as well as palates, than any other fruit. It grows and flourishes in the sunny south. It is found smiling its welcome in the early spring on the prairies of the far north, and at all points between it grows or may be grown.

It was feared by many that the importation of strawberries from the United States would result in weakening the appetite of consumers and lowering the price of the home-grown article. The history of demand and average prices for the past 10 years shows a contrary effect. With the increase of importations and the trebling of the acreage in home-grown berries, the demand and price have kept full pace.

## CULTIVATION

The old saying that in order to properly train a child one should have begun with its grandmother, applies with full force to the cultivation of the strawberry. If land has been liberally fertilized and tilled in such a manner as to keep down all weeds for two or three seasons previously to its being planted, half the battle has been fought and won. With ordinary intelligence applied to later operations, success is insured.

While the strawberry will succeed on a variety of soils, the ideal one is a rich, sandy loam with a quicksand sub-soil, not too near the surface. Having selected such a soil, it should be well fertilized and fall plowed. In spring, cultivation should begin early in order to retain moisture and, in cases where the soil is heavy, to keep it from becoming hard. When ready to plant in spring plow deeply, harrow and then roll firmly.

## PLANTING

The distance between the rows and between the plants in the row depend somewhat on personal opinion and largely on the habits of the variety. I prefer a distance of three feet between the rows and from 15 to 24 inches between the plants in the row.

Probably the most common method of planting is for one man to carry a spade in one hand and a basket of plants in the other, while another man or boy puts the plants in the holes made by the spade and each presses a foot through the earth at the roots of the plants as they pass on. In this manner an active man and a boy can plant about one-half an acre a day.

As soon as the planting is over, the soil should be well cultivated and hoed to retain moisture and to prevent the

air from getting at any roots that have not been entirely covered. Cultivation should be continued at intervals of about once a week for the first two months. Early runners should be turned into the rows as they form the strongest plants. The rows should not be allowed to become matted by plants that set late. Some of our most successful growers allow each parent plant to set but two young plants on either side. This system, called the "hedge row," is not generally practised, nor is it conceded to be always practicable.

When the frosts of December come, the rows should be mulched in such a

ovens (which are still designated express cars), or when the trains run into market three or four hours late, the result is quite different to that obtained when the crates are properly handled, deposited in a well-ventilated car and delivered at their destination on scheduled time.

The distribution of the crop is one of the most important factors, and we think the ordinary grower would do well if he would confine shipments on commission to the larger centres, and allow buyers at local points to supply smaller markets. If all the mouths in the Dominion are given access to a full allow-



Plan to have a Field of Strawberries like this Next Year

way as to protect the plants from the severity of the winter. The following spring, cultivation is again necessary, especially if the plantation is to be maintained for a second year's picking.

## PICKING AND SELLING

To get the berries picked carefully, regularly and promptly, is the knotty part of the problem. Provision should be made a season in advance for a supply of pickers. These require considerable tact in managing. Picking is done by piecework at the usual rate of one cent a box. In addition, a premium of some kind might be given those pickers who, by skill and neatness, bring in their berries in the most attractive and saleable condition.

Marketing is the next feature in order. The success or failure of all our efforts up to this stage depends, to a greater or less degree, on the services rendered by the transportation companies, rather than on the prices charged. When the crates are thrown three or four feet by a stupid, careless expressman, and landed in one of the old-fashioned, stuffy

ance of strawberries, we need not fear a glut in future markets.

I have outlined a system involving a large amount of labor, care and expense. What result should the average grower expect from such a system, fairly carried out? Place the average crop at 7,500 quarts an acre, the average price at six cents at railway station, making thus the sum of \$450 as the gross receipts for an acre. From this, deduct the following charges: Plants required, \$25; cultivation, \$25; fertilizers, \$35; rent, \$5; picking, \$75; packages, \$75; and packing and delivery, \$25. This makes a total of \$275 and leaves a net profit of \$175, a sum which every good cultivator may expect to exceed and which, also, compares favorably with other branches of fruit growing.

I do general pruning early in the spring and then go over the trees again after the leaves come out to remove diseased limbs, which could not be noticed before the buds open.—Harry Dempsey, Rednersville.

\*A portion of a paper read before the recent convention of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association.