

* Open Letters. *

Fruit in Manitoba.

SIR,—I am confident that apples can be grown here yet, though many people think otherwise; but when young trees grow in the summer and live through the winter, they will surely get large enough, and if they grow large enough, why will they not bear apples? I believe there are twenty-five varieties of apples of the catalogue of Messrs. Stone & Wellington, that will grow here; and, if money were a little more plentiful, I would not hesitate to plant ten acres with two year old trees. Black, white, and red currants look well, and so do gooseberries, raspberries and strawberries.

J. PARKINSON, *Portage la Prairie, Man.*

Unproductive Gooseberry Bushes.

SIR,—Being confined to the house with an attack of catarrh, my mind has been running over my changed luck in growing gooseberries. Formerly for years I never had even a middling crop, but the bushes bore every year seemingly every berry the limbs had room for. What is the matter then that bushes run for fruit (not for plants), last year bore only a scattering crop though they bloomed profusely in spring, and the fruit set nicely, but afterwards disappeared as if by magic. Again, this year the bushes set a fine crop, but again this dropping has gone on till only very few are left.

Let me give a sketch of my experience, so that haply the cause for this may be discovered.

Formerly I had not the time or implements necessary to cultivate, but mulched instead—in some cases imperfectly, but kept the weeds cut under and between the bushes, with ordinary chop-hoe and shove-hoe, so that the soil was not disturbed more than half an inch deep; and year after year had loads of fruit. One hard knoll, the top soil of which had been scraped off often became so hard that *it was impossible to cut the weeds.* (*I always dug in the fall after picking*), and still the bushes on this knoll never gave less than five quarts to the bush, 75 bushes set 4 x 4.

Well, I got improved machinery, a Planet Jr. Horse Hoe, with all its combinations, and started to cultivate deep last year, with the result that I had a poor scattering crop. This year the ground being hard, we decided to dig before setting the scuffler to work. The soil was so solid that it broke out in chunks from 6 inches to 8 inches deep; and though the scuffler was immediately set to work the young fruit again disappeared completely.

I first noticed this with bushes that had been mounded up to grow plants; though only a few lower limbs and suckers were cut away the main stems never bore any fruit. This fact I mentioned to you last summer when visiting my place. The removal of the same wood without any disturbance of the soil, would only have the effect of increasing the size of the remainder of the fruit.

This year I have four rows with 30 to a row, which were mounded up last summer; these mounds were not removed this spring, and the stems above the mounds are bearing a good crop of fruit while the fruit has nearly all fallen from the adjacent rows which are being cultivate.

I notice by reading up everything at my command, that this is not a new idea, but it has been noted by a number of fruit growers in the United States; among the rest, the Rural New Yorker.

Mulching is certainly easier and saves a great deal of hard work, but one cannot have his garden looking so nice and trim. I have no doubt that deep cultivation of the soil early in spring, especially if the weather is dry, will invariably be followed by this result. Years ago I took great interest in the Fay's Red Currant and the Champion Black, and had about 400 bushels of each. These were dug among first thing in the spring and afterwards continually cultivated with a Planet Jr. Hand Wheel hoe. Every year the currants dropped till only the naked peduncles were left. During all this time I had a plot of Downing gooseberries mulched, for the want of time to cultivate, and they bore enormous crops every year. Now, upon the same soil, very rich, almost every berry falls, the only difference being thorough cultivation.

Nantyr, June 11th, 1896.

S. SPILLETT.