

GOOSEBERRY IMPROVEMENT.

SIR,—A good article by B. Gott, of Arkona, in *Rural Canadian* moves me to send to the organ of our fruit growers a paper on the same subject.

The article alluded to deals with the improved American gooseberries, and says that no good results have followed crossing with the English sorts.

Deep rich clay loam and much trouble and care are needed in order to secure reasonably long life.

I think, however, that our few and middling garden kinds must have resulted from crossing the native with the English, but that the mother selected was one of our swamp berries, of low, weak, spreading habit; fruit smooth yet deficient in flavor, size, and sweetness, whereas had the other wild type been chosen for crossing or improvement we might not now have had to complain that of all our fruits the gooseberry is the poorest.

The taller sort of wild gooseberry is very frequently prickly or even spiny, but is sometimes almost or quite smooth, and the flavor very fine.

Last summer I found a bush bearing smooth good sized fruit, sweeter and richer than any English kind I have met with, save one or two.

Were our best tall-growing upland natives crossed with suitable European sorts we might expect what has not yet been attained, plants adapted to our climate, fit for any soil, permanent, needing little care or training, averse to mildew, and bearing large crops of high-flavored, good-sized fruit.

From your remarks in *Horticulturist* I am pleased to know that Mr. Dempsey, Mr. Saunders, and others are moving in this direction, and that a few years may bring about a great reform in the fruit.

Our generally rough natives are so excellent for preserves that long ago in

the United States the fruit was named the "Jam Berry," and if for no other reason deserves to be saved from the extinction which in case of so many wild plants follows the clearing off of our woods.

As an instance of the permanence and reliability of our upright growing natives, I may state that when the country was new, after trying many English kinds and throwing them away, I got into the practice continued fitfully till the present time, of marking the better specimens in harvest and lifting them in the fall, by which means I obtained in a couple of seasons a large plot of bushes four feet apart.

Without any care most have borne fruit for more than 25 years, and some plants are 6 to 8 feet high, so that one can place a chair under and sit to pluck or eat the fruit.

The native gooseberries are not absolutely free from mildew, though it is the exception, and not the rule as is the case with the English sorts in most situations.

Cuttings strike with much difficulty, but layers take readily and soon make fine roots; transplanting in the fall never fails. They are continued by a natural system of renewal. Almost every year tall straight twigs grow from the crown of the root, and in the next season these form side branches, which next year and for several years bear fruit. Pruning merely consists in reducing the number of these young stems, and in removing old ones occasionally.

The varieties are innumerable, as each district has its peculiar sorts:—Small, large, rough, smooth, sour, sweet, green, red, in various shades, rusty, purple, almost black, shining or with a bloom.

While doing well under cultivation, there is little or no improvement in size or quality of fruit thereby, and