

Asparagus—How to Grow it.

A garden is not a garden without its asparagus bed; and yet, how many families have what they call a vegetable garden, and no asparagus in it! How has this happened? Perhaps the leading spirit in these families has been too much occupied with other matters, and the matter of asparagus in the garden was not thought of. Or, it may be, the thoughts of having to wait two or three years for the harvest has stayed any movement in this direction. Or, possibly, some may have regarded asparagus culture as something "too high" for them. They have read about the deep trenching, and pains taking, and salt-spreading, and all that, and they don't care to think any more about it; and they will go without their greens if they must grow them.

But let me tell you there is a fascination about this crop for me—but be sure that I do not do all that the books say; nor do I do it in just the way they say. I will tell you what I do:—

If I can, I save my own seed, selecting a few large strong seed stocks, and gather when ripened. I prefer to sow my seed in the fall—spring will do—in drills 2½ feet apart, and cultivate with plough and hoe. At one year old the plants are large enough to be set in a permanent plantation, where they stand in rows 3½ feet apart, by 2½ feet in the hill. The books tell us to set in rows with only "9 inches" from hill to hill. This is entirely too close if you mean to grow large asparagus. Of course, with us, land is cheaper, and favors my practice. I contemplate setting a plantation four feet apart each way, and shall expect the best results from it.

Asparagus will repay good culture, and heavy manuring, and it is in your power to give it, don't withhold it. But, plant asparagus in any case, for family use; it will return you a most grateful dish in the spring, even if you were not kind to it. It may seem wicked, but I question the beneficial effects ascribed to salt on this crop.

I don't plant my asparagus ten inches under ground, as recommended. I make no efforts to blanch the stalks of asparagus. I cut above ground, and prefer to eat my asparagus green and not white; and so will anyone, whose prejudices are not stronger than his appetite.

Again, you read recommendations to top-dress the asparagus bed in the fall, with manure. This is wasteful, for the winter rains, and other agencies will carry off the manural properties, and leave, at best, a mulch, which, if that were the object, had better have been some cheap material, as straw, or other litter. The time to manure all crops is in the spring, just as growth is ready to start. I cut a full crop the fourth year from the seed, "and expect to do the same to the end of life;" for an asparagus bed once rightly made, and carefully cared for, is a "joy for ever," so far as he who planted it is concerned.

It is the practice of some in this neighborhood, and elsewhere, to mow off the asparagus plants during summer, and two or three times during the season—with a view of destroying weeds, and preventing the asparagus going to seed. I don't like the sound of this—cutting off the tops to increase the roots. I could not so object to cutting out the seed stock before ripening, as the ripening of seeds is said to draw most heavily upon the life of the plant.

But some will ask, *Does it pay to grow asparagus?* Why, yes. It pays to grow almost anything wanted in the markets, and I am not sure, if this be not one of our surest and most profitable crops.—*Boston Cultivator*.

Ferneries and Soap.

There will doubtless to many occur the question upon reading the heading to this article, "What possible relation can there be between ferneries and soap?" Let us explain: Every one who has a fernery or Wardian case, whether it be a simple bell-glass or a more elaborate case, with a frame and sides of plate glass, has found one annoyance—the condensation of moisture upon the glass. The soil of the fernery must, of course, be moist, and the inclosed atmosphere must be moist also. Whenever from any cause the temperature of the glass becomes lower than that of the atmosphere it incloses, moisture will be deposited, and the glass will be obscured by either a fine dew or by large drops and irregular streams of water. J. B. W., of Windsor Locks, Ct., set himself to work to overcome this difficulty, and in a communication to the *Hartford Courant* tells of his success. The method is the simplest imaginable. If the fernery is covered with a bell-glass shade, rinse it out with a strong solution of soap. If the frame is one of plate glass, sponge it over with the same. When we saw the article, we tried the experiment by sponging over one-half of our quadrangular case

with soapy water. It has been done now for several days, and the soaped portion is perfectly transparent, while the rest is for the most of the time so obscured by drops of water as to render the contents of the case nearly invisible. Where the water collects in globules, there is an imperfect adhesion between the water and the glass. A thin film of soap establishes such an adhesion between the moisture and the glass that drops are not formed, but the condensed vapor spreads itself evenly. The soaping needs to be renewed once a fortnight, or as often as experience shows to be necessary. In the article referred to, J. B. W. cautions against handling a shade with soapy hands. We, on behalf of our readers, thank J. B. W. for calling our attention to this very clever "dodge," which has much increased our enjoyment of our own fernery, and will doubtless be found useful by many others.—*Hearth and Home*.

Uses of Grapes.

Men can live and work on grapes and bread. The peasantry of France, Spain, and Italy, make many a satisfying meal in this way, and of the wholesomeness of the diet there can be no doubt. Medical men constantly recommend the use of grapes for their patients. Scarcely any plant can equal the vine as regards the beauty of its leaves and fruit. As a covering for bare walls, and for affording shelter, and shade, it is a climber of the first rank. To sit under one's own vine, has in all ages been considered the acme of rural happiness, an emblem of peace, a symbol of plenty, and a picture of contentment. That pleasure, though perhaps not in all its fullness, may become the heritage of thousands in these temperate climes. Neither our latitude, longitude, nor leaden skies, nor erratic climate, forbid the growth of the grapevine throughout the larger portion of the kingdom. In many districts its fruit will ripen more or less perfectly. In almost all it would ripen sufficiently to be useful for eating, or wine making. Even green grapes are useful for conversion into vinegar, for making tarts, or for wine. Ripe grapes are universally esteemed. No one tires of them. If any declined to eat their own grapes, or grew more than were needed for home consumption, there is a ready market in most neighborhoods for grapes, at from fourpence to a shilling a pound, according to quality. Thus a flourishing vine on the gable end, or front of cottages, might make or save the rent many times over. I know many cottage-gardens in which the vine, or vines, are not only their chief ornaments, but the main source of profit. These might be multiplied up and down the country to infinity. As a means of increasing their number, I would suggest that prizes be offered by all cottage-garden societies for the best trained, and most fruitful grapevines on cottages. I have known this done to such excellent effect that the vines became models of both; and such a spirit of emulation was stirred up that one laborer had paid another two days of his wages to do up his vine for him. There need be no fear of an excessive supply; neither are ripe grapes so perishable as most other fruits. Cut with a piece of wood attached, and placed in bottles of water, or even suspended in a dry room, the ripe fruit will keep good for months, and even improve by keeping. Besides, the grapes that are not eaten, can readily be converted into a cheap beverage. The prejudice against home made wine has hardly reached the laboring classes. On the contrary, there are few of these who do not contrive to make a few bottles of elder, currant, primrose, gooseberry, or rhubarb wine. Those of them who grow grapes mostly try their hands likewise at real wine-making. All this is better than nothing but beer, cider, or gin. I have known cases, not a few, in which a little home-made wine in the cupboard has proved the strongest attraction to keep husbands at home.—*The London Garden*.

A SIMPLE ORNAMENT—A pretty mantle-piece ornament may be obtained by suspending an acorn, by a piece of thread tied around it, within half an inch of the surface of some water contained in a vase, tumbler, or saucer, and allowing it to remain undisturbed for several weeks. It will soon burst open, and small roots will seek the water; a straight and tapering stem, with beautiful, glossy, green leaves, will shoot upward, and presents a very pleasing appearance. Chestnut trees may be grown in the same manner, but the leaves are not so beautiful as those of the oak. The water should be changed once a month, taking care to supply water of the same warmth; bits of charcoal added to it will prevent the water from souring. If the little leaves turn yellow, add one drop of ammonia into the utensil which holds the water, and they will renew their luxuriance.

European Larch as an Ornamental.

While the many excellent qualities of the European Larch as a timber tree, have been and continue to be urged upon us, I have sometimes feared that its great value for ornamental purposes may have been in some degree overlooked. This was again forcibly brought to mind the present autumn. For weeks after nearly all other deciduous trees had shed their leaves, the larches here were brilliant in all the various shades of orange and yellow, lengthening out the beauty and brightness, which but for them would have been wanting in the landscape of the fading year.

Their appropriate place seems to be scattered among evergreens, or in front of evergreen screens or groves. In such situations, the contrast between the deep green on the one hand, and the rich coloring of the larches on the other, is exceedingly fine. The young leaves appear very early in spring, and their peculiar soft yet bright shade of green, with the graceful weeping habit of the smaller branches, sufficiently distinguish them from the more sombre shade and stiffer growth of the evergreens. In a small grove on our own place, containing eight or nine kinds of evergreens and a few larches, the most casual observer will, any time in spring or early summer, notice the larches at once, and probably remark that they are the most beautiful trees in the lot. Some object to them on learning that they lose their foliage late in the fall; but surely it is better thus than to miss the beautiful tints that linger as if loth to depart, sometimes, as in a few thrifty specimens of ours the present autumn, until December.

There is no objection to their use quite near the dwelling, as they are bright and fresh looking even in winter, the young wood being beautifully striped. Their excellent habit of starting so early in spring, suggests fall planting, or very early in spring, though with care and despatch, they can be moved after becoming quite green, especially if a pailful or two of water is poured into the hole after being nearly filled, and when soaked away topped out with dry earth, and mulched immediately.

These remarks are made not only because the European Larch is a favorite, but with the hope of hearing from others on the same subject.—*Michigan Country Gentleman*.

A new grove of "Big Trees," for which California is famous, has been found on the Coulterville route to the Yosemite Valley. The new grove has been named the Merced Grove of Big Trees. It is said to be fully equal to either the Calaveras or Mariposa Groves, and is easy of access, being on a direct line to the Valley. One of the trees is said to be 75 feet in circumference.

A METHOD OF GRAFTING WEEPING TREES.—We observed in Messrs. Osborn's Nursery, at Fulham, a new method of grafting in the case of weeping trees. It consists in working them on dwarf stocks, so as to admit of the plants assuming their natural habit from the ground upwards. Of these three good examples may be found there, viz., a Kilmarnock Weeping Willow, a Weeping Beech, and a cut-leaved Weeping Birch. These all present a much more natural appearance than weeping trees do when worked on high naked stems, which hitherto has been the practice generally followed.—*The Garden*.

SHADE FOR GLASS HOUSES.—The best permanent shade for plant houses is linseed oil and sugar of lead, in the proportion of about a teaspoonful of lead to a quart of oil; but the exact trial must be governed by the amount of shade required, which can easily be proved by trying it upon pieces of waste glass. First, wash the glass thoroughly clean, and then, on a dry, clear morning, take the oil mixture, and paint as thinly as possible over the glass with an ordinary paint brush. By dabbing it gently with a dry brush, it will impart to it the appearance of ground glass. The shading will stand for a season, and can be removed by washing it with a strong pearl ash water.—*New Jersey Mechanic*.

The Isle of Wight is remarkable for its gigantic Fuschias, Myrtles, and Hydrangeas; but more remarkable than all these are its gigantic Yuccas. Of these last one may be found in the gardens at St. Clare, 11 feet high, with a stem, at 2 feet from the ground, 11 inches in diameter. It is much branched, and in order to prevent the wind from injuring it, the branches are clasped and otherwise supported. There are also other fine specimens in this garden, as well as in the gardens at East Cowes Castle, where the largest is over 10 feet in height, and has a stem some 9 inches through. This, like the others, has to be kept in position by means of artificial supports.