

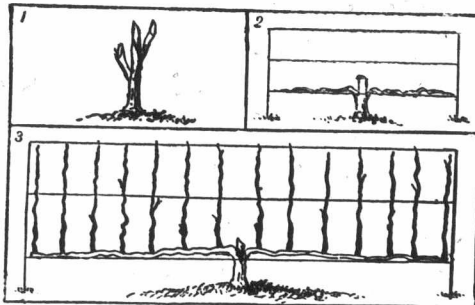
Grape Culture.

BY G. W. CASTON.

So much has been said and written about the culture of the grape, that it would be hard to present anything new. But yet, this beautiful and most luscious of our fruits receives very little attention, especially in the colder parts of Ontario. People think: Oh, the climate is too severe; it is no use trying to grow them. And they don't try, or, if they do, they do it in a way to invite failure. Now, of course, I do not mean to say that grapes can be grown and ripened in the open air in any part of this province. We know well that in some parts of Ontario the climate is altogether too severe; but that the grape can be successfully grown over the greater part of Ontario, I believe the future will prove. Of course, we know that in the more favored portions of the province, such as the Niagara Peninsula and the Lake Erie counties, grape culture is one of the leading industries, and the fruit attains to great perfection. But when you come to the inland and northern counties, you scarcely ever see a vineyard. Very often the only thing in the grape line to be seen is a few scraggy specimens of vines, in some obscure corner of the garden, which have never got a fair share of sun and air, and have never been pruned, but allowed to grow wild, and, of course, never did any good. It is not the purpose of this article to attempt to give advice on grape culture to those who are already making a success of it, and who are probably more experienced than myself. But to those who live (like myself) in the colder and less favored parts of the province, and who would like to cultivate this most healthful fruit, I would give a little advice, based upon experience, and give some simple directions for their guidance, which, if followed, will make it plain sailing. In the first place, the soil best suited for the grape is a rich, warm loam, with natural drainage. If planted on clay soil, choose land that is a little rolling, if possible, and be sure that it is thoroughly under-drained. Do not plant near a swamp, or any place subject to late frosts in spring or early fall. Choose a location the most free from those frosts that you can. Before planting, see that the soil is thoroughly well cultivated (it is a very good plan to summer fallow the year previous to planting,) and enriched with good manure. You can get nothing better for this purpose than hardwood ashes. They may be applied an inch thick over the ground and then plowed in. It would be almost impossible to get the ground too rich for the growth of grapes—bone meal, blood and offal from the slaughter house, are all very acceptable to the grape. Where any of these manures cannot be obtained, good barn-yard manure may be applied at the rate of 25 or 30 loads to the acre. But the ashes are a specific, on account of the potash and phosphoric acid they contain. The next thing to consider is, what variety to plant. If you live in a locality where, as a general rule, the temperature does not fall much below the freezing point before the 8th or 10th of October, you may plant the old reliable Concord, the hardiest and best all-round variety I know. I have ripened it here in the County of Simcoe for several years in succession, and it stands the winter the best, is free from mildew, and bears the most fruit of any variety I know of. I have only one fault to find

with it: I wish it would ripen a little earlier. If your season is too short for Concord, the next best among the blacks is the Worden, from eight to ten days earlier than the Concord, nearly, if not as good a bearer, and of very good quality. If your season is still too short for the Worden, I would recommend Moore's Early; and, if you are not very particular about quality, the Champion. Those two come in together with me. Moore's Early is a very good grape, as to quality, but a poor bearer. The Champion is a good bearer, but of poor quality; its chief virtue is its earliness. It is ripe two or three weeks before the Concord. In red varieties, I would recommend Lindley (Rogers' No. 9) and Brighton, and in white, the Niagara, it being a child of the Concord, possesses the hardiness, vigor and productiveness of its parent. But, in my experience, none of the red or white varieties ripen earlier than Concord. For a long keeper, I would recommend the Vergennes; but it is a late variety. In planting, set the plants ten feet apart each way; spread the roots out well, and do not plant too deep, unless the subsoil is very rich, as they are gross feeders and will reach out in all directions in search of nutriment, which is most abundant near the surface.

And now, one of the most important things in grape culture comes next, viz., training and pruning the vine. There are several systems recommended by grape growers; but I will give



the one I follow myself, as it is simple and easy, and with me, very successful. When you plant your vines in the spring a number of shoots will start (and just here is where most people make a mistake—they allow them all to grow). Rub off all but the strongest one, and let it grow and train it up to a lath or stake. When it gets about four feet high nip off the end—what gardeners call stopping. In the fall, after the leaves have fallen, cut back to two buds, as shown at Fig. 1, and cover with coarse manure or litter of some kind, and leave them covered till warm, growing weather sets in in spring. You will now require a trellis of some kind, and I would recommend one made of three wires stretched on cedar posts, the first wire sixteen inches from the ground. Saw off the tops of the posts five feet from the ground, and stretch the top wire along the top of the posts, and the middle wire half way between the two. You can set the posts twenty feet apart in the rows. You will train the two buds on the bottom wire of the trellis in opposite directions, as shown at Fig. 2. Let these shoots grow as long as they will, but shorten them in the fall to about four feet each, when you will lay them down and cover them again. The next spring you will uncover your vines and tie the canes to the bottom wire of the trellis, and rub off all shoots on the under side, and allow only those on the top side to grow. Those you will leave about eight or ten inches apart, and train them up your trellis, as shown at fig. 3.

When the vines reach the top of the trellis, pinch them off at the top wire, and pinch off the lateral shoots when they have developed three or four leaves past the last bunch of fruit. This is all the summer pruning that is to be done, and is done with the finger and thumb. Your fruit bunches will develop near the base of those upright canes. With regard to future pruning, you may for a year or two cut back all those upright canes to one bud in the fall, and after that cut back every other one, alternately, growing your fruit on the laterals of the canes which are left. When you do this allow no fruit to grow on the one you have cut back to one bud; but let it grow a new cane for next year. Leave those alternate canes which are to fruit next year, about three feet long. Always do your cutting back in the fall, after the leaves have fallen, for if cut in spring they will bleed freely. Some cultivators say this does no harm, and do their pruning in March. But I believe it is a bad practice, and would always advise the fall as the right time. Always cover your vines in winter. Loosen them from the trellis. After you have cut them back lay them down, being careful not to break them, and cover with pea straw, coarse manure, or earth, if you cannot get anything better. Never strip off the leaves to admit the sunlight upon the fruit. Some people think this helps the fruit to ripen; but that is simply nonsense, as they require the protection of the leaves to perfect the fruit; and without a good supply of healthy foliage the fruit will not ripen perfectly.

Now, if those simple directions are followed, you will find it is not such a hard task to produce grapes as you probably imagined it was. Each farmer should have at least a dozen vines, four of each color, red, white and black. By following the directions here given he will have grapes to eat, for wine, for preserves and for jelly, for dessert and to treat his friends. By using an abundance of this luscious, health-giving fruit in the family, he will not only add to their happiness, and thereby make the home more attractive, but will probably avoid sickness and save doctors' bills.

The Best and Simplest Methods of Keeping Fruits.

By L. Woolverton, M. A., Secretary of the Fruit Growers' Association of Ontario.

Much has been written of late in the horticultural press concerning the importance of the free use of fruit from a sanitary point of view. And the arguments are so well sustained by medical men that we, as fruit growers and farmers, readily accept so agreeable a prescription for the welfare of our families.

Granting, then, the importance of having a supply of fresh fruit throughout the year, it is evident that any remarks that may help to serve this end are, at this season, quite in place.

Among the most important fruits from a dietetic standpoint, is the apple. Granting that our farmers have selected the best varieties for keeping up a successive supply during the winter months, the question is, "Do they usually handle them in the best manner to attain that end?" Surely not all, for every one follows his own way. And amid the great variety of advice given by the public press what mode shall we adopt, one says:—"Let your winter apples and pears hang on the trees as long as they will before gathering them." I beg respectfully to differ from this. Is it not evident that as soon as perfection of size, form, color, flavor, in short general maturity is reached, that nothing more can be gained from the tree, and that the process of ripening will proceed, a process which when a certain point is passed, is called decay. As soon then as our winter apples have attained maturity,