

The Handling of the Strawberry Plantation*

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I START to prepare my land for a strawberry crop one year before the time for setting the plants, by manuring the field and planting a hoe crop, such as potatoes, roots, tomatoes or corn. The cultivation of this hoe crop during the previous year puts the land in excellent condition, destroys the weeds and otherwise makes the soil suitable for giving good results when the strawberries are planted. After the removal of the hoe crop in the fall, I plow and put on a heavy coat of manure. In the spring I start cultivating early, working the manure into the surface and getting the land into the best possible shape for the setting out of the plants. On my soil, which is a deep sandy loam, plowing is not necessary and, in fact, I never plow manure anyway.

When the field is thoroughly prepared, I mark both ways, making the rows three feet, six inches apart and the plants in the rows from eighteen to thirty inches apart, according to the variety. Some varieties make an excellent stand and form a splendid row when set thirty inches or even three feet apart.

PLANT SELECTION

I consider that one of the greatest elements that contribute to my success is my choice of the plants at the time of setting. The usual custom among strawberry growers is to take plants from the sides of the rows; this, of course, gives them the small and weaker plants.

In procuring plants, I take up the whole row, taking only the best and strongest plants. This plan is along the line of plant breeding, a subject which should receive greater attention by practical fruit growers. Plants should always be taken from a new row, a row grown the previous year and one that has never fruited. Some growers will sometimes take plants from the side of a row that has given a crop. This should never be done.

WHEN AND HOW TO PLANT

The time for setting plants depends upon the season. I do not favor too early setting, preferring to wait until the danger of heavy frost is over; in our district, from May 1st to 15th, and have had good results from plantations set as late as May 24th. Cool, cloudy days are preferred, but we do not wait, when the soil is in proper condition, only taking great care not to expose plants and roots to wind and sun.

After the plants are prepared by digging and selecting the best and trimming off dead leaves and runners and carefully straightening out the roots and placing them compactly in an ordinary eleven-quart basket, I use a man and a boy for setting. The man runs a spade into the soil, producing a cut of six inches, at an angle of forty-five degrees. Instead of drawing the spade out of the soil, he simply presses it away from him to raise the soil up, and then the boy places the plant behind the spade. The spade is withdrawn and the pressure of the foot completes the operation.

Great care is taken to get all the roots

same as if planted in the mark made by the marker.

CULTIVATION

As soon as the plants are set, we commence cultivating and hoeing, repeating this process every week or ten days until fall. We cultivate crossways just as long as we can do so without injury to the new runners.

While hoeing the first time, we invariably use the fingers around the plant, adjusting the soil so as to prevent any soil lying on the crown or leaves, and always keep the blossoms nipped off whenever they appear. It is strict atten-



Harvesting Strawberries in the Niagara District—New Plants in the Foreground

Plantation of Mr. S. H. Rittenhouse, Jordan Harbor.

the soil from covering the crown. I try to get the crown of the plant about on a level with the surface of the field.

Of late years, I have preferred not to set the strawberry plant into the little track or furrow made by the marker as it places the crown of the plant too low down and makes it difficult to keep the crown from being covered while hoeing and cultivating. Therefore, I plant in one corner of the angle formed by the marker and am careful to plant in the same corner of the angle all across the field. When I am through setting, the plants are in perfect rows both ways just the covered and at the same time prevent

tion to small details that makes the difference between a profitable crop and an unprofitable one.

Towards fall, when the runners have begun to spread, instead of dragging them with the cultivator to prevent the rows from getting too wide, I cut them off with a roller plow coulter. It is quite a simple thing to attach a rolling coulter to each side of the cultivator with clips and it does its work nicely and prevents the too thick setting of plants along the sides of the rows, which is not desirable.

I have had some trouble with cut worms but have not done anything to protect against them, except good culti-

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