

rich. When the surface of such a bed is raked over, removing any stones or other obstructions, then shallow drills should be opened about one inch deep, and a foot apart. The seed is strewn thinly by hand in these drills, and then covered by raking the bed with wooden rakes, drawing them in the direction of the drills. Fresh seed will sprout in two weeks from the time of sowing, in favorable weather. Seed older than one year will take longer to germinate, and if more than three years old, is unsafe to sow with any certainty of its ever coming up.

It is a good plan to scatter some radish seed in the drills at the time of sowing the asparagus seed. The radish will germinate and come up in a few days from the date of sowing, marking the lines of the rows. This will give a chance to run a scuffle hoe between the rows, destroying any weeds that may appear, and keeping the surface loose until the asparagus plants are well up. Then the spaces between the rows should be disturbed frequently and no weeds or grass allowed to grow. Under favorable circumstances well grown one year old plants will be strong enough for transplanting in the permanent bed. Plants older than two years should not be planted, for more than likely they will fail to give satisfactory results. Those who only want a few hundred plants to make a family bed, will find it cheaper to buy them from some responsible person than to raise them from the seed. One pound of seed will sow a bed 20 by 100 feet, and if the seed is fresh will give about 15,000 plants.

PREPARING THE GROUND.

When properly made, an asparagus bed will produce paying crops for a quarter of a century, under good annual treatment. There should be no short-sighted economy practiced in putting the ground in order. If the ground selected is naturally wet, or likely to become so, then by all means have it thoroughly underdrained. Asparagus can only be grown to the highest point of profit on soil that is free from stagnant water, thoroughly pulverized to a depth of at least twenty inches, and then heavily manured. There will be more satisfaction in planting only a quarter of an acre on this thorough scale, than in planting an acre under indifferent preparation and poor manuring. The ground should be thoroughly ploughed and subsoiled both ways, and then plenty of well rotted yard manure plowed under. The more manure that is applied, the more productive the yield will be when the plants are fairly established. Barn-yard manure, composted with the salt and lime mixture, will be found an excellent manure for asparagus.

PLANTING.

It has long been a mooted question whether the Fall or Spring was the best

time to plant an asparagus bed. In most cases more will depend on the condition and tilth of the soil than the time the roots are planted. Where the soil is heavy and retentive of moisture, and long and severe Winters, undoubtedly the Spring is the best time. But on sandy and clay loam, and as far south as Delaware or Virginia, Fall planting will do just as well, and often better, than Spring planting under similar circumstances. When the ground is prepared by frequent plowings and subsoiling for field culture, or the garden spot thoroughly trenched with the spade, then the furrows should be run but three inches deep, and three feet apart each way. A single plant is set at each intersection, being careful that every root of the plant is stretched out to its full length, and then covered with not more than four inches of earth, if planted in the Fall, and only about two inches when set in the Spring. This light covering at first, or until the plants have started to grow, is the safest plan to follow. When the young shoots are three or four inches above the surface, then, by running a cultivator between the rows, the loose earth will fall toward the row of plants, adding a couple or more inches of covering above the crowns of the plants—making in all from four to five inches in depth.

In garden culture, this second covering may be drawn over the rows by the hand hoe, any time during the Summer. A cultivator should be kept going between the rows often enough to prevent the growth of weeds in the bed. This will be found the cheapest method of culture. When planted in the Fall, the rows should have a light mulch of barn-yard manure put on in November, and in the Spring following this mulch, with an additional quantity of manure, either barn-yard, fish, guano, bone dust, or superphosphate, should be applied, and all turned under early in April, or as soon as the ground is dry enough to work.

Annual dressings of common salt will improve the quality and increase the size of asparagus. There need be no apprehension of danger from the application of salt to asparagus. I have frequently put on as much as two inches in thickness, on different spots, on an asparagus bed, and then the young shoots came through this coating of salt without apparent injury. A dressing of twenty-five or thirty bushels of salt to the acre on an asparagus bed every second year, will be quite enough, in connection with the annual coating of barn-yard, a compost to be applied in the Fall or Spring, as circumstances may dictate.

No asparagus should be cut from the bed the first or second year. Some growers carry this so far as not to cut any until the fourth year from the time of planting. In case the plants have grown

vigorously, a third of a crop may be cut without at all injuring the plantation the third year. The amount taken off the third year depends altogether on the condition and vigour of the plants. In case they are weak, it would be poor policy to weaken them still more by cutting for market or home consumption too soon. In the Fall of the first year it is a good way to throw a shallow furrow from either side towards the rows, and then rounding them off with a hoe or rake. This slightly elevated ridge will dry out sooner in the Spring than a flat surface, and asparagus treated in this way, will often make a difference in earliness of five or six days, which is an important item to those who grow it for market.

Early asparagus always brings higher prices than what comes in late in the season, and, therefore, every advantage by locating, character of soil and treatment, should be taken into consideration by those who are about its culture for profit.

VARIETIES.

There were only two varieties generally cultivated for market purposes until quite recently. These were the green and purple-topped. The identity of these two was frequently doubted by intelligent gardeners, and the size and difference in colour attributed to location, soil, and heavy or light manuring. Two years ago, S. B. Conover, of New York, introduced a variety under the name of "Conover's Colossal." For this variety Mr. Conover claimed extraordinary size of spears, and that it was equal in quality and productiveness to those varieties that were in general culture for market purposes. This claim had to be tested by practical growers before discarding old and tried for new and untried kinds. Many doubted that it was any other than what was cultivated on Long Island, and other asparagus producing sections. I have watched the "Colossal" closely for two years, and firmly believe it is the best variety of asparagus that we have for field or garden culture. The spears will average twice the size of the common kinds, and the "Colossal" is equal, in my estimation, in quality and productiveness to any variety that I am familiar with. Plants at one year old will average as large as plants two years old grown on the same soil and under the same treatment, of the green or purple. In another article on this subject I will have something to say on the profits of asparagus culture.—By P. T. Quinn, in *N. Y. Tribune*.

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