

Strawberry Growing on the Farm

The Most Important of all Small Fruits

By W. J. Boughen, President, Dauphin Horticultural Society

The strawberry is the most important of all small fruits. This is an absolute statement and particular persons might require some qualification. Still, I believe over fifty per cent. of my readers will agree without question that the strawberry is at least the most desirable of all small fruits. I have tried a good many varieties, probably twenty. I obtained my first variety from one of the Western seed houses about eighteen years ago and I think they were the old "Wilson." They bore fruit intermittently and I think there are some in the district yet.

Then I got some of Prof. Hansen's hybrid variety, the "Dakota." The pedigree of the "Dakota" runs thus: A wild Manitoba strawberry from near Winnipeg was used as the male parent and a large, high quality tame berry as the female parent. Hansen raised to fruitage some eight thousand seedlings (you may imagine the vast amount of work involved—genius is usually poorly paid), and of these eight thousand he kept only one and consigned the rest to that pyre of many horticultural hopes, the "brush pile." This one was selected for its hardiness, for its prolificacy, for its quality of fruit and for its plant making propensities. It is a dark red berry of pleasant, keen flavor when fully ripe. It grows as big as the average strawberry and its flowers are perfect or bi-sexual. The berries will ship fairly well and are either conical or wedge-shaped. I have had a few wedge-shaped ones over two inches broad. They are perfectly hardy without protection, but are better for it. We cover with straw or straw horse manure in early winter and then rake off some of it in the early spring. This covering retards the bloom-

ing season and often brings them safely past spring frosts. The most tender time for strawberry plants is when they are in full bloom. Last year a June frost did not destroy the green berries nor the unopened buds, but the full blossom was totally destroyed. By leaving some uncovered you can have them two weeks in advance of those covered, but as the mulch, especially on a dry year like the last, holds the moisture by shading from the sun and preventing evaporation you will have the better crop on the mulched patch. I always leave a check patch of every variety without covering to test it for hardiness.

Varieties Desirable and Undesirable

I have tried and discarded "Senator Dunlap," "Beder Wood," "Commonwealth," "New York," "Glen Mary," "Lovett," Stevens' "Late Champion," "Warfield," and a few others. I have only the "Dakota," "Splendid," and "Crescent" at present. The two latter seem to be hardy without protection. The "Splendid" is recommended by bulletin 62 of the Central Experimental Farm as being one of the best for both home use and commercial growing. It was originated by C. H. Sumner, Sterling, Illinois, and is described as follows: Fruit roundish, medium to large, deep red, seeds not prominent, flesh red, juicy, acid, moderately firm; above medium quality, early to medium season, plants vigorous, numerous runners; a productive early variety. It has perfect flowers.

The "Crescent" has imperfect flowers and is a conical, tart berry. This variety should not be planted alone.

The chief drawbacks to making money

in strawberry culture in Manitoba are white grubs and drought. Four out of every five crates of strawberries raised in America are grown under irrigation. So altho we have now had two very dry Junes in succession don't imagine our province is the worst in the world to grow strawberries.

J. L. McKay, of Dauphin, an old strawberry specialist from Nova Scotia, told me the other day in discussing strawberry culture that a strawberry was simply "water and sunshine." The trick is to get the right blend. I am going to try to blend these with a centrifugal pump this summer, and if I do I will keep track of costs and results and give Guide readers the benefit of my experiment.

Plants and Planting

Now a word about plants and planting and I am done. Often in sending out plants to purchasers we send them out after they have made considerable spring growth. Some people kick unless they get big plants, but plants should be sent out dormant before any spring growth takes place in order to give best results. About a third should be primed off the roots before planting. This induces the plant to send out several new white roots at each cut. Only last year's plants should be used; they can be told by the yellowish roots. Black rooted plants seldom live and have no vitality anyway. Get your plants from the nearest place obtainable provided you can get the right varieties. Be sure to plant varieties with perfect flowers, or if you use an imperfect variety then it is necessary to get also a variety with perfect flowers to plant every third row. The cultivated varieties can

be grown successfully everywhere where wild ones are found. The "Dakota" is growing successfully in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Perhaps I should say a word in regard to the everbearing strawberries. I have three varieties, "American," "Productive" and "Superb." They are hardy and bear a few berries all summer of good quality, but I can't see enough in them to grow them commercially. They might do better under irrigation. We plant them in rows 3 to 4 feet apart and 1½ to 2 feet apart in the row. Long rows are desirable as time may be saved in cultivation. Two persons can work well at this job. Use a line of binder twine and get the rows straight. Keep the roots of the plant wet while planting. One person takes a spade and opens a hole by forcing the spade into the ground, pressing it forward and backward. As soon as it is withdrawn the other person spreads the roots and puts the plant in position, taking care to plant with the crown just above the surface. It may be firmed with the foot of the planter. All blossoms are to be snipped off the first summer, and with diligent weeding and cultivation you will have a fine matted row by fall with the probability of berries galore next summer.

The mulch left in the rows, I should have said before, besides preventing drying out serves to keep the berries clean when the violent storms send the rain down in torrents as it did (not) last summer.

All grain intended for seed should be cleaned and graded, in order to retain only the strong kernels.

Farm Experiences

CORN GROWING IN THE WEST

My experience in growing corn in the West has not been in growing it in large quantities, as I have never grown more than half an acre in one season, but it has been over a period of fourteen years and ought to be of some value to those who have an idea that corn cannot be grown successfully in our prairie provinces.

Our climate, tho not as good as Ontario or farther south, I will admit, appears to be fairly conducive to proper growing and ripening of the earlier varieties, such as Squaw, Free Press (Patterson) and Gehu. The season seems to be a trifle short at both ends, but the hastening of the ripening can be materially increased by careful selection for seed of the choicest and earliest ripened cobs. This can be done by close scrutiny during August, marking those cobs by tying colored strings on them and later harvesting them separate from the rest.

Early Varieties

Great importance should be attached to developing a strain in the West that is suitable to the climate, and I unhesitatingly recommend the two varieties, viz: Free Press (Patterson) and Gehu. I have grown the first named ever since it was introduced, having got my start from thirty grains supplied from the Free Press office, and I have never failed but one year in bringing this excellent corn to maturity. The Gehu is an excellent corn, too, tho my experience with it has only been over a period of three years. I have always found it ripened quite as early as the former, and I have every reason to believe it will prove equally as good. The above named varieties grow to about the same height, that of six feet, and for roasting ears far eclipse that of our old, well known Squaw corn. These two varieties should make a good fodder corn for feeding from the sheaf

WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE?

We welcome contributions to this page from our readers. Each article should relate to one subject only; it should be the actual experience of the writer and should not exceed 500 words in length. Every farmer has some particular way of doing a thing which saves him time and which his fellow farmers could make use of to advantage. If you have a "good thing," would it not be a generous act to tell your friends about it? All the readers of The Guide are friends, so make this a place for "swapping" ideas: If you have nothing else to write about, give your experiences on any of the following subjects:

What work can be most profitably done on the roads in the spring? How can roads in your district be best maintained?

Which way have you found to be the most profitable in marketing your grain? By the load at the elevator, consigned to a commission firm, on the track, or how?

When do you figure on having your cows freshen? And why?

What provision do you make for succulent crops for your pigs during the summer? What crops do you sow, and when and how for this purpose?

How have you made provision for a plentiful water supply on your farm? Did you have any difficulty finding water? What method did you adopt or what led you to dig your well where you found water?

How much did you make feeding steers during the past winter? What did you feed, how much and so on?

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or for silage purposes. The Free Press is an eight-rowed and the Gehu a ten or twelve-rowed corn. Both are a bright yellow in color.

Saving Seed Corn

A great deal of choice seed corn is ruined year after year by poor handling and storing. When corn is taken from the stook it contains about 25 per cent. of moisture, and unless this moisture is reduced considerably before freezing weather sets in, the vitality of the seed is materially lessened. Some artificial means is almost necessary in our western climate to get rid of this moisture. Probably there is no better place for the average farmer to dry his seed corn than in the kitchen, garret, or some other place well ventilated, directly over a heated room. Corn dried in this way will show up exceptionally well when tested for vitality.

The growing of different varieties close together should not be followed, because corn hybridizes very easily, and if this practice is continued will soon spoil your original variety.

Planting and Cultivation

A word or so about the planting and

cultivation. I always sow with the seed drill, spacing the rows wide enough to use the scuffler between rows, and opening the drill to sow two and a half bushels of wheat to the acre. This plants it quite thick enough. I usually sow on summer-fallow land or where potatoes have been grown the year previous, and I sow it immediately after I have my wheat sown. This may seem early, but I have always found the spring frosts do not injure it very much, and there is nothing like getting it in early and thereby avoid the fall frosts that might catch it.

I have never used any fungicide to treat the seed before planting, and have not noticed much smut in any crop I have ever grown. I harvest with the binder and stook in small round stooks.

I feel quite enthusiastic about growing corn in our prairie provinces, and I don't think the day is far distant when we will be growing corn that will make the more southern growers sit up and take notice.

Sask.

G. A. H.

TO MAKE A FLOAT

The "Float" or "Planker," as it is sometimes called, occupies an important place in the farmer's equipment. It is easily and cheaply constructed in the following manner: Take three pieces of two by twelve plank of the desired length. I would advise 12 feet for a three-horse and 16 feet for a four-horse outfit. Lay the first plank on the ground with the front edge raised about two inches, then lay the second plank along the rear edge of the first, lapping about four inches, repeat with the third plank and spike; this leaves them on the bevel. Then get two pieces of 4 by 4, notch them to fit the planks, place them at a convenient distant apart and spike them to the planks from the underside. To the front end of these pieces of 4 by 4 nail an old horse-shoe, and connect the horse-shoes by a chain or strong piece of wire, and the implement is ready to hitch on to. When loaded with stones and used immediately after the breaking plow, it does almost as good a job as the packer, and as a serviceable float can be constructed for under five dollars, and a packer costs here one hundred and forty-three, this phase of the matter is worthy of a little attention. When used later on breaking that has been summer-tilled, it not only does good work in pulverising the sod, but also accomplishes excellent results in filling up slight inequalities in the surface of the ground, such as buffalo wallows, etc. The high badger knolls are also somewhat toned down by its agency. In working such cultivated land, whether breaking or plowing, care should be taken to follow immediately with the harrow, for if the land is left smooth a lot of moisture will be lost by evaporation. If used just before the drill, the rows can be seen better and the horses will have better footing. The drill will roughen the surface and check evaporation, tho of course it is advisable to follow the drill with the harrow.

—G.D.

Sask.