

Mulching Orchards with Pomace.

Plowing orchards, unless with more care than it is ordinarily done, is not to be recommended. If done by careless hands, much more harm than good is likely to be the result. The roots are broken and cut by the plow, and the trunks and branches of the trees are often injured by the team.

There are those who advocate the keeping of the surface of the orchard in permanent grass, urging in its favor, that by this course too great a tendency to wood growth is checked, and the formation of fruit buds is encouraged. This course, so far as my observation goes, has not proved a success. A close mat of grass and roots around the trunks and under the trees is an injury. In some parts of the country blue grass is sufficiently vigorous to kill the timber by suffocation. The more delicate organization of fruit trees would suffer from the same process. Anything which will keep down the grass and make the earth mellow under the trees is an advantage, and for this purpose nothing is better than mulching. It will keep down the grass, will greatly aid in retaining the moisture of rains, and will prove a great benefit to the trees, rendering expensive cultivation unnecessary. For this purpose I have used old hay which was of little value for feeding purposes. Those living in the vicinity of salt marshes can easily collect a great deal of material at small expense, which will answer a good purpose. In fact, much of the salt grass which is cut would be worth fully as much to feed directly to the trees in the form of mulch, as it is when fed to animals.

Mulch should be applied in spring, as it will then become so much decomposed before winter as not to afford a living place for mice. The grass will be effectually killed, as far as the mulch extends, which should be as far as the branches reach, although half the distance will prove of great value. The moisture from rains is retained for a long time, which will do much to carry both tree and fruit through seasons of drouth, with no damage to either. The earth worms are induced to work, and reduce a few inches of the top soil to a very fine tilth, which puts it into the most favorable condition possible for the trees. The decaying mulch affords plant-food to sustain the tree, which is as much needed on most soils as it is for any other crop. Where material for mulching can be easily and cheaply obtained, an orchard may be kept in good condition by this treatment, as easy and cheaper than by any other method.

The pomace from cider mills, which is generally considered as a waste product, and which is often thrown upon the road-side and in waste places to decay, makes a good mulch, and is of value to spread over the surface of the orchard. The acid which it contains will kill the grass, and will, with leaves, return nearly all to the soil which has been taken out by the trees, which principle found to work well in all other crops. It is often said that pomace spread about trees will have an injurious effect, and cause them to die. Two years ago I spread the pomace from 5,000 bushels of apples upon a little more than an acre of orchard, the result of which has been far from injurious. It has made the trees exceedingly vigorous and healthy, and the past season a good crop of large fruit was produced. The improved appearance of the orchard has led many to inquire what brought it about. Since then not less than half a dozen men in whom I have confidence have told me of the benefit they had derived from applying pomace in the same way.

A cart load applied to a tree has been found very satisfactory.

The parasitic growth of moss on the trunks and branches should be removed by scraping, and with good care will not again reappear. An old orchardist once said to me that the best way to get rid of moss on the trees was to first get it out of the ground by good cultivation, and it would not trouble the trees. At any rate, the orchard will be found as grateful for good treatment as any part of the farm.—[The Cultivator.]

Mr. J. S. Woodward, in the New York Tribune, objects to all potash washes for apple trees, because, while they will undoubtedly kill the moss and remove the loose bark, they are also liable to burn and discolor the tender bark beneath, or cause it to crack or scale. He recommends instead a wash made of caustic soda which is just as efficient and much less dangerous. If caustic soda can not be obtained, common sal soda (washing soda) heated to redness in an iron kettle, will answer.

Poultry.

Feeding Meat to Fowls.

Animal food may not be a necessity, but it is greatly craved by fowls. In a natural state all fowls are eager for every description of insect diet, and will leave grain for it. Turkeys are great foragers, ranging the fields for insect food until the appetite is sated. Fowls are more quiet in their habits, and do not wander off in search of the coveted diet, which, nevertheless, is quite as much relished. Where chickens are valuable, it is desirable that every one should be raised after being hatched, if possible. The extra care bestowed appears to make them weakly and slow of growth, where a common chick, not of so much value, goes ahead with little or no care, and thrives on indifferent keep. The cause of this is obvious. The choice fowls were far fetched and costly, which were the parents of these chicks. They have been in confinement under close surveillance while the eggs were gathered, and fowls dearly love liberty. They are obliged to do with the food given them. They are weary of their quarters, and pine for change. They become weak and feverish, still they will lay to a certain extent. Soon the egg shells become thin, and many times the eggs are dropped from the roost without shells. More freedom produces better results.

Feeding animal food is a good practice, but it is also bad if not given in a healthy state. Many are in the habit of throwing dead carcasses of animals, and flesh in a decaying or decomposed state, into the yards for the fowls to pick. It is true they will eagerly devour it at first, before its presence becomes loathsome to them, but it is bad practice. When running at large they seek and find antidotes for this putridity, but we know not exactly what. Careful feeding must be observed where fowls are kept in confinement. When free, the busy feet dig out many insects and other food from the earth. The exercise is beneficial, and the food thus gained is greatly relished, and acts as an appetizer for the grain that follows later on in the day. Healthy, well-fed fowls, which have access to grain at pleasure, seldom fill their crops in the morning, if they are thus trained. Meat that has begun to decay should never be fed to fowls in confinement. As a general thing, meat should be cooked and minced.

The great difficulty in feeding meat to fowls in confinement, is the danger of giving too much at a time. They fill their crops with more than can be digested well. A piece of salt fat pork is greatly relished by fowls at times and is beneficial. Take a square piece that has the rind on it, and nail it to a firm block in their yards or building where they can have access to it at pleasure, but so that they cannot tread over it. A daily feed of "scraps," either tallow or lard, may be given with good effect, but do not feed superfluously on one day and neglect it the next.

Animal food is forcing, and for hens that are laying eggs for hatching it should be fed sparingly, as these fowls should not lay too rapidly, for the good of the coming chicks. Exercise is highly beneficial to health.—[Ex.]

Poultry Farming.

It is by no means so difficult a matter as many suppose to obtain a plentiful supply of eggs all through the year. All that is necessary is to hatch your chickens some eight or nine months before such times as they are required to start laying. If eggs are wanted during the autumn and winter months, then the chickens must be hatched early in the year, during the months of February, March and April. Pullets hatched in these months ought to be laying well in November, December and January. This is the time when new laid eggs are costly, and people are only too glad to get them even at high prices. A hen or pullet is, after all, something like a machine; get the steam up to a certain pressure, and, all being free, away goes the engine. When your pullet arrives at the age of eight or nine months, if she has been properly fed, housed, and is in a healthy condition, she must lay, she cannot help herself. The operation may be delayed for a time by frequently removing the pullet from place to place, but the time arrives when even these means fail, and she is compelled to produce her eggs.

Of course some pullets are more precocious than others, exactly the same as some are far better egg producers than others. Thus, by only breeding

from the early or best layers, in the course of two or three years a marvellous improvement may be made in the egg producing capabilities of a breed. Brahmas, as is well known, soon become broody; and yet some people have, by carefully breeding from the best laying hens, produced birds which seldom want to sit. At the present time, we know of some hens which commenced laying before Christmas, and they have not shown any desire to sit, although they have been laying their three and four eggs weekly, ever since, and the father of some of these birds was so good in all Brahma points that he took a third prize in a class of eighty at the last Crystal Palace show. In the non-sitting varieties, such as the Spanish, the Polish, the Hamburgs and others, the natural desire to sit has been eradicated by careful selection, and there are birds of these breeds which rarely, if ever, become broody. In a few years any breeder could obtain the same results by only retaining for stock purposes the most productive hens, and those showing the least desire to sit. But on the farm, where poultry should be kept not only for their eggs, but for supplying the table, it is necessary to produce large-framed specimens. And this end can only be obtained with a little care and attention. It is a common practice at most farm houses to kill off, as soon as they are big enough, all the largest and most forward cockerels while the smaller and more weakly birds are retained for breeding. This goes on year after year, and the result is that size and stamina and early maturity are in a great degree lost. What is needed is that one or two of the largest and best cockerels should be retained for breeding, and the slow-growing and smaller birds be killed or sold. The breeder of exhibition poultry kills his inferior specimens directly he notices any blemishes in them, so as to make room for the more promising and better specimens. He never dreams of retaining for stock purposes the small, weedy things. It is by this selection that the laying properties may be increased, and a superior strain of table fowls produced at a very little expense or trouble. At the present time several gentlemen interested in table poultry are engaged in producing birds which shall, if possible, be heavier and finer specimens than those hitherto seen, and there can be little doubt that they will succeed in their efforts.—Mark Lane Express (Eng.)

In cold weather, drink given to fowls should be above the temperature of the atmosphere.

The Rearing of Calves.

It may be laid down as a first proposition that a dairy farmer should raise at least as many heifer calves as are required to fill up the vacancies that occur year by year in his herd of dairy cows; and it is all the better if he has a few more than he wants for that purpose. Some people contend that three-year-old-in-calf heifers can be bought for less money than they can be raised for, counting in the risk. This, however, depends entirely on the facilities a man has for keeping young cattle so as not to interfere with the milk pastures.

On all mixed farms it is commonly a simple matter enough to summer and winter young cattle so cheaply that it is better to raise them than to buy others for the dairy herd, and many farmers find it to their advantage to raise them for sale when "on note," off to fatten for the butcher. Judiciously carried out, rearing pays very well, and heifers raised on the farm are commonly found more profitable to it in after life as early milkers, than others that are raised elsewhere and purchased. Besides which it is more than probable rearing will always pay well, providing only that the stock is of good quality; for the demand for milk in our towns and cities is sure to go on increasing, and there will always be a brisk demand for store stock of good quality.

A careful breeder can but seldom buy dairy stock that will suit him as well as those of his own rearing. Those he buys may, perhaps, be as well bred as his own are in every respect, but if they are only as well and no better bred, they will scarcely ever do as well in the milk-pail as those that have been reared on the farm.