

PRUNING GOOSEBERRIES AND CURRANTS.

Gooseberries.



ONFINE pruning chiefly to thinning out main branches and cutting out weak and exhausted parts, regulating the current year's young wood as evenly as possible over the trees at such distances apart that the hand may be passed down among them without being scratched. Allow no shoots to remain to grow inwards or in reversed positions whereby they tend to crowd the centres, which ought to remain moderately open. Keep the shoots clear of the ground by cutting away the lowest growths. The pendulous-growing varieties require special attention in this respect, and when pruned ought to be cut to upward pointing buds. Prune erect growers to outward buds, and those of spreading growth to inside buds, which will modify to some extent their natural habit, producing more shapely and serviceable bushes. In thinning out, either cut the shoots dispensed with entirely out close to the old wood, or leave them to the extent of an inch, when they will form spurs at the base. A dusting of lime when the bushes are damp is good for the trees, destructive of insects, and a preventive of birds taking the buds. If manure is needed draw the earth from below the branches till the roots are visible, then spread a layer of decayed manure on them, covering with a sprinkling of fresh soil. The remainder of the soil outside the radius of the roots may be manured and forked over, or the latter alone will do where the ground is rich and the trees productive.

Red and White Currants.—As the disposal of a proper number of branches—usually five to seven in ordinary sized bushes—is effected early in the existence of the bushes the pruning is a very simple matter. It consists in pruning back to within an inch of the main stems all the side growths produced during the summer, shortening the extension growths in the same way with full-sized bushes, but in those required to extend, leave a length of not more than nine inches. With weakly trees six inches is enough. The object of shortening the branches to these distances is to cause proper breaks or side shoots, and to strengthen the stems so that they can bear the large crops of fruit which are annually produced from the clusters of basal buds congregated on the spurs. Give the trees a good dressing of manure over the roots, and sprinkle the branches with fine lime, which serves to cleanse them of moss, and otherwise benefits them, as well as preserving the buds from birds, which, however, are not so destructive with currants as gooseberries.

Black Currants.—These bear differently, and, in pruning, abundance of young wood must be left, confining the pruning to thinning out the oldest branches, and a large proportion of the latest bearing shoots. Strong sucker-like growths from the base may be freely encouraged, or vigorous growths from