

Garden, Orchard and Forest.

Gravel as a Mulch.

In the spring of 1874 I had the superintendence of planting some two hundred trees of various kinds in and around our public grounds. The spring and succeeding summer was one of unusual and excessive drought. About eighty of the trees—white elm, soft maple, American linden, catalpa, etc.—were planted on the sidewalks for shade trees. They were on an average ten and fourteen feet high. They were planted in a rather poor clay ground in planting with a rich, black, sandy loam, and within a few inches of the surface, the gutters being shallow and well powdered. The walk was covered with about four inches of gravel. Every one of these trees grew finely, many of them making a growth of branches two or more feet in length. Some of the elms when planted seemed almost dead, but they started and grew well. None of them were watered artificially. The same kind of trees planted within the enclosure, in much better soil, but without the gravel mulch, grew very badly. Many of them, probably half, died, notwithstanding constant care in watering, deep and well drained soil, shortening in, manuring with grass and litter, etc. The same care attended more than half the trees planted by others all over the country. Hence, I conclude that gravel and small stones are unsurpassed as a mulch. They allow the rains to readily penetrate the soil, retain moisture, absorb heat and equalize the temperature. The practical utility of gravel as a mulch, where it can easily be procured, should be tested by all tree planters. It will not injure heavy clay soils at least, but will be beneficial.

Small Pots for House Plants.

How frequently do we hear the complaint—"I don't know why my plants do not bloom in winter! they all seem to be thriving, but produce no flowers." The reason that such complaints are so common is simply this: They grow their plants in pots that are too large for them; and when the time comes that they should bloom, we find that the substance that should go to the formation of buds and flowers taken up in the luxuriant growth of foliage with which the plant is clothed.

But this, although important, is not the only advantage to be gained by the use of small pots. They are so much handier in transferring from one place to another, occupy so little room, and are in every way so much more desirable than the large ones, that we would give them the preference even if they did not enhance the flowering qualities of the plants which were grown in them.

Of course, small pots are not to be recommended for all kinds of plants. For there are certain plants that will do no good unless the roots have an abundance of room in which to expand and receive nourishment. But for such plants as ferns, geraniums, abutilons, cypripes, and others, upon which we depend for flowers in winter, they will prove extremely valuable. Potted plants and others of which we do not expect flowers, but want a luxuriant growth of leaves, should be grown in large pots.

Like all other things, small pots have their objections. One, and the chief one, is the drying out of moisture. If the atmosphere is dry, they cannot be watered every day, and the soil dries out very soon. They may be watered twice a day with good effect. Again, large plants require more water than small ones. But a little thought will do the plants no harm. Try small pots, those of you who are unacquainted, and you will find that they have many advantages to be gained in their use.—*Am. Farmer.*

Native Plants for Ward Cases.

A correspondent of the *Rev. New York* recommends the following native plants as producing a fine effect when grown in Ward cases:

Maiden Hair, sundew, common Spurge, and all of the smaller ferns, Spider Throat, Scented Geranium, the two-leaved, Rattle snake Plantain, Blue Top, Cap. Mintwort, Liverwort, Spring Beauty, etc. etc. etc. Partridge Berry, May Hensbit, Golden Rod, Wintergreen, and the common live pinks. These native plants, with mosses, are far more satisfactory than green-house plants, and the Ward case is the most delightful study an invalid can have—or a well person either.

Prevent Girdling by Mice.

"In time of peace prepare for war," is a sound doctrine applied to orcharding. The maxim can be construed as advising the taking of means in early autumn to prevent the depredations of mice during the coming winter. Many orchards are injured every year by delaying steps for prevention till the ground is frozen, when the simplest method of preventing the mischief cannot be practised. The easiest mode is to mound up the foot of the tree, having first cleared the orchard of weeds and grass by clean cultivation. The *Country Gentleman* says—

Field mice like nothing better than plenty of soft grass to burrow and creep under, and when they can get it, they care very little whether there is an inch or a foot of snow above. But a clean surface above is not sufficient always, and where this precaution has not been attended to at the right season, we must resort to other remedies.

We have never found the practice of throwing up a small mound at the foot of each stem to fail—except in some extreme cases, where the snow above became crusty, forming a new base for the approaches of the mice. Usually this remedy may be regarded as safe and fully reliable, but the work should be done in a proper manner, with the earth compacted and smoothly placed, and beaten with a spade. The owner of a large, young orchard pronounced this remedy shamming, because, by throwing up mounds of soil in the grass or hard, the mice found a snug hiding place among the blocks of turf and the germination did more harm than good. If he had first cut the sods aside, and made the mound with clean, compact, beaten earth, he would probably have saved his trees. These mounds need not be over a foot high, and if the land is clean, less will do.

If this remedy has not been provided before the ground is frozen for winter, it will, of course, be too late then to attempt it; but an excellent substitute for the earth may be found in coal ashes, which, if piled and compactly beaten about the root, after having been partly moistened, will serve as an efficient protection. Mice do not particularly fancy it at any time, and they will never ascend under the snow over a steep surface of this material.

When neither embankment nor ash mounds can be or have been provided, mice may be kept away by treating the snow hard about the tree, whenever it falls or is drifted around it.

Another good remedy for small orchards is enclosing the trees in tarred pasteboard or sheathing paper. A roll of sheet iron or sheet tin is very effective, and this may be applied at any time after the ground is frozen hard. Sheet tin is better than sheet iron, unless the iron is covered with gas tar. Rolling tin, fourteen by twenty inches, will make four protectors to each tree, each costing about five cents, and will last a lifetime. When applied, a little pressure while securing them about the tree, will cause them to fit the ground. If properly bent, the spring of the sheet will hold the lapped edges firmly together.

A Simple Ornament.

Ladies who are always for new floral adornments will find that a pretty sitting-room ornament is made by taking a spruce cone and baking it in an oven till the scales open out equally. It is then filled with equal parts of sand and grass seed, a string tied to the top, and the whole put in the dark, in a jar, with water enough to come half way over the cone. In a week it is placed in the sunlight, when the seeds sprout rapidly, and in a month fill a gallon jar completely. It is then taken out and hung in the window. Every morning it should be thoroughly soaked in milk-warm water.

Treatment of House Plants.

Every two weeks all winter I take a handful of tobacco stems and steep them by pouring boiling water over them, then when the tea cools enough to bear the hand, I pour it over the plants. Some times the leaves wilt for a few moments, and then straighten up and have that bright, fresh look they have in summer after a shower. Then I weaken the tea a little more, and wet the ground in the pots, and I have no red spiders or green flies.—*Am. Farmer.*

A thin layer of sharp silver sand, not only looks fine spread over the earth in pots of plants, but is also a specific against worms in the soil.

Evergreen Culture.

It is a little surprising while evergreens are so generally admired by all classes, and are so easily and cheaply grown, that more use is not made of them by farmers for adorning their grounds, or shelter for fruit orchards or plantations, as well as dwellings. After planting, their culture is not one whit more difficult than corn, and to plant them when small is about as easy as the putting out of cabbage plants on a rainy day.

In these remarks I have in mind, of course, people of moderate means, with more or less land, and who desire to procure evergreens at a cheap rate. Large ones are costly; the freight on them is also costly; their handling is laborious; while without skillful treatment in planting and care afterwards, they are quite as likely to die as small ones. The cost of the latter is very moderate, say two dollars per hundred for plants 9 to 12 inches in height; these, if they have been several times transplanted in the nursery, will do for open air culture. Smaller ones can be had for less, but they usually need partial shade for a year or two, as their roots are so tender that a con- siderable portion will be killed outright by our fierce summer sunshine.

Where the soil is rich and mellow—rich enough to grow 50 bushels of corn per acre—it will doubtless be perfectly safe to plant them without any manure. Strike a furrow and plant about a foot apart in the row—or further apart if they are to remain there some years—and after planting, keep well cultivated, allowing no weeds to grow and the soil never to bake. If planted three or four feet apart, so that they can be cultivated both ways like corn, it will save considerable hand work, and where the grower has plenty of land this will be an excellent plan. With such treatment, and in good condition when received from the nursery, the losses will hardly reach three or four per cent, and after being grown in this way from one to three years, and well pruned during the time, they will be in excellent condition for planting where they are to permanently remain. They had better receive this preparatory culture, because then the best and truest can be selected, and the back-sides ones left for further culture. This chance to select the best is especially important where the purpose is to grow a hedge or screen, because then the lack of uniformity makes the work unsightly and unsatisfactory.

For growing in nursery rows, or for permanent hedge planting, one of the best manures is well pulverized swamp muck. If a trench can be made in the fall, and muck then distributed through it liberally, the freezing and thawing of the winter will make it a fine condition for the plants in the spring without other preparation. But what is wanted is that the muck must be freed from most of its surplus water, and its great sourness, hence the muck is not important. With about a shovelful to each plant, covered by good culture, they will grow and do well—will stand an ordinary drought without injury—and if it is desirable to transplant them in the course of two or three years, it can be done with a ball of muck and earth adhering to the roots, which will both facilitate planting and will secure success in the new location. A round-pointed and long-handled shovel is the best implement for this work, as by it the roots can be easily put so as to retain a fair sized ball of earth, and the necessary leverage be obtained from the handle for lifting from the ground. Then if placed on a sled or sleigh, or what is still better, a horse-drawn cart, they can be readily moved by horse or ox power to the place for planting, with little danger of the earth being shaken from the roots.

Many details as to treatment or handling, and the best implements to use, will readily suggest themselves to an inquiring mind. No fullness of detail can ensure success to an ignorant or chronic blunderer. But the man who will bear in mind the use of roots and tops, their relation to each other, the value of a mellow and fertile soil, and the means by which it is to be obtained, will find no difficulty in growing evergreens. One essential point is to get them well started, as afterwards they can bear many hardships which would kill them out right at first. For instance, let no one plant small evergreens in a stiff soil and expect a rapid growth, no matter how rich the soil. The habit of our climate to droughts will soon make a mishap of them. One purpose of muck in planting is to retain moisture, and coolness for the roots, and the frequent stirring of the soil is an extension of the same idea. But after four or five years this care will not be so essential, though still important where a rapid growth is desired.

Evergreen trees, but and espec the base when any there is a the leader over those pyramids there is a all the br ness and plants are care in aff Farmer.

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