

THE SITUATION.

The most suitable situation is a very gentle inclination towards the East or Southeast, that it may have all the advantages of the morning sun. All good gardeners take pride in having early crops, and this inclination insures an early maturity of the vegetable. A Northeastern aspect is to be avoided, as our worst storms are from that direction. A Northwestern exposure, though cold and late, is less liable to injury from late and early frosts, as vegetation in such situations is sheltered somewhat from the rising sun, and does not suffer so much if it becomes slightly frozen. It is not the frost that injures the plants so much as the direct heat of the sun falling upon the frozen leaves and blossoms. Cabbage, cauliflower, spinach, lettuce, and other salads are much more easily brought to perfection in a Northern exposure. Many of these, in the more Southern climates, run up to seed immediately if exposed to the full sun. The soil, too, is usually richer, and will retain its fertility longer, other things being equal, in a Northern exposure. It is a great advantage, if the garden slope at all, to have it slope in more than one direction, giving a choice of exposure, and generally also of soil, as it is thus adapted to both late and early crops. When the drainage is good, a level is not undesirable, but whatever the situation or aspect, the surface must be smooth and level. Care should be taken that the productivity of the garden be not diminished by the proximity of large trees, which are injurious by their drip to all plants beneath them, and, by their shade and extended roots, to those more remote.

THE SOIL.

In selecting the grounds, it is of the utmost importance to have the soil of a healthy quality, being mellow, dry, and capable of being worked with a spade. The best soils are of a friable and loamy texture; the worst, those of a very light sandy, or stiff, clayey description. In a garden designed for the cultivation of a variety of plants, both sand and clay soils are desirable. But the best soil, for general purposes, is a loam of medium texture, arising from a suitable admixture of the two, as they reciprocally correct the defects of each other, and with the addition of organic matter, form a soil suitable to the cultivation of nearly all garden productions. Any soil, with judicious culture, draining and manures, can be converted into such a loam.

THE SIZE.

A garden should be proportioned to the size of the family, and their partiality for its different products. A small garden, well manured and cultivated, with a suitable rotation of crops, will yield more pleasure and profit, than an ordinary one of three times its size. An active, industrious hand can take care of an acre, well provided with hot-beds, cold-frames, etc., keeping it in perfect neatness and condition; or, if the plow and cultivator be brought into requisition, as they should be in large gardens, four times that amount can be under his care. If but little room can be allowed near the house, cabbages, carrots, turnips, potatoes, and the common crops can be grown in the field, if well enriched, and cultivated with the plow and hoe.

THE FORM.

The form will often depend upon the situation of the garden, or the inclination of the ground; however, it is of no great importance, and may be arranged to suit the peculiar taste of the proprietor. When it is a matter of choice, a square or parallelogram is most convenient for laying out the walks and beds. A parallelogram, extending from east to west, gives a long south wall for shading plants in Summer, and a long, sheltered border for forwarding early crops. In plantation gardening, an oblong square shape has the further advantage of giving longer rows for the plow.

FENCING.

The objects of fencing are to procure shelter for delicate plants from cold winds; also, shade for those that require it, and above all, to keep out of the garden intruders of all kinds, that the owner may enjoy its fruits without molestation. A high, close, board fence answers a good purpose, but a stone or brick wall is preferable; and, what is better still, in sections where it can be cultivated, a living hedge of closely planted evergreens.

THE SELECTION OF SEEDS.

The most healthy and vigorous plants are generally produced from seed, and this is the only method of obtaining new varieties.

Some seeds retain their vitality but one or two seasons, while others grow better by keeping. *Great care should be used in the selection of seed*, as on its perfection the growth of the young plant depends, and the cost of cultivating an improved variety is no more than a degenerated one; hence the necessity of purchasing only such seeds as are offered by RELIABLE HOUSES, or men who pride themselves on sending out none but the best or most improved kinds. Above all, do not buy *cheap seeds*, thinking to save a few cents in the purchase, for they will prove *far dearer* in the end.

SOWING SEEDS.

This is one of the most important garden operations. Seeds, to germinate well, require light, heat, air and moisture. They should be sown when the ground is mellow and fine, and, if possible, before a gentle rain; and the soil should be rolled or gently pressed upon the seed, after sowing. The freshest seeds of some varieties often fail from improper management in sowing. When sown too early, while the ground is wet, they are apt to rot. When sown too shallow, in a dry time, there may not be sufficient moisture to sprout them, or they may be destroyed by dry and hot weather after they have germinated. Insects may destroy the plants before or as soon as they appear out of the ground. Strong manures, such as hen dung, guano, and chemical manures, if under powerful fermentation, will frequently destroy the vitality of seeds, and sometimes kill the tender plants. Complaints frequently made that seeds sown are not good, may quite as often be attributed to other causes as to the quality of the seeds. The first effect of air, heat and moisture upon the seed, is to change its starchy matter into a sugary pulp, the proper food of the embryo. If, at this time, the seed be withered by exposure to heat, without sufficient covering, it will perish. It often happens that seeds are planted in a fresh-dug soil, and the above change in the properties of the seed takes place, but the earth not being pressed upon it, the seed dries up and the embryo perishes. Others, again, are buried too deeply, and though the seed swells, yet sufficient warmth and air are not obtained to give it life. The first thing in sowing, is a suitable preparation of the soil, so that the young roots thrown out, may easily penetrate it. It must be made more or less fine for different seeds. Peas, corn, beans, and coarse seeds do not require the soil to be as finely pulverized, as small seeds. The seeds must also be firmly fixed in the soil, and pressed by the earth in every part, in order to retain moisture sufficient to encourage vegetation; but they should not be so deeply buried as to be deprived of air, or to have their ascending shoots impeded by too much soil above. In all cases, seeds should be sown in fresh-dug soil, that they may have the benefit of the moisture within; but they should never be put in when the soil is really wet, as the ground will bake, and they will perish. Moist weather in Spring or Summer is excellent for putting in seeds, provided the ground is mellow. Just before a light rain is the best possible time for sowing most seeds. When the seeds are planted, the earth should be usually pressed upon them with a roller, or by treading with the feet, in the case of large seeds, or by smoothing the surface with the back of the spade, or by walking over them on a board, for the smaller kinds. Light must be excluded until the roots can derive nourishment from the soil. When they come up, keep them free from weeds, and thin according to the requirements of each plant.

CULTIVATING THE SOIL.

The surface of the soil cannot be too frequently stirred. "If I had to preach a sermon on horticulture," says Downing, "I should take this for my text: 'STIR THE SOIL.'" As soon as the plants are well above the ground, they should be thinned out, so as not to interfere with each other's growth. At the same time, the soil may be loosened a little about them, so as to break any crust that may have formed, without injury to the young plants; and the weeds may be removed. A little later, stir the soil with a narrow hoe, taking care not to cover the young plants. Every weed should be cut down or pulled up, no matter how small. It is not enough to keep the weeds down; digging deeply among the plants admits the atmosphere, and actually manures the young plants. In dry weather, it is very essential that the soil be stirred often. The air waters the fresh-dug soil much more effectually than we can do. A man will raise more moisture with a spade and a hoe in a day, than he can pour on the earth out of a watering pot in a week. If the ground be suffered to become close and