



WILLOW AND OSIER GROWING.

By OTTO RANDS, SHERBURNÉ.

HAVING an opinion that the cultivation of certain varieties of the *Salix*, or willow family, viz. :—Willows proper, Osiers and Sallows—would contribute both pleasure and profit to the cultivator, and gardeners can make a good use of not a few themselves, at least, their brethren in Europe do, for tying rhubarb, asparagus, and other garden stuff, in parcels for market. The *Salix discolor* is especially suited for that purpose. If rods are cut in the fall and winter before the sap rises again in the spring, and thoroughly dried, and packed where they will keep dry, they will remain in good condition for years. When required for use, thoroughly soak in water, and they will work tough and pliable, as when green; so providing a useful material all the year round. But beside this, there is an active demand for considerable quantities of rods for basket-making purposes, both in Canada and the United States, most of which are now imported from Europe, and which could and ought to be grown at home; and they will grow well on land too wet for other purposes, any land, except clay, gravel, or chalk, will suit them, providing the water level is from twelve to eighteen inches below the surface; occasional flooding is beneficial, rather than not. I have not yet discovered any native varieties suitable for basket-making; I therefore imported fifty varieties from England, in 1883, several of which are doing well. In preparing land for an osier ground, it will pay to sub-soil plow or double-dig it eighteen inches deep; the roots will work better, and you will be able

to keep down weeds easier, which must be carefully done, or your crop will prove a failure. Prepare your land in the fall, plant in spring. After leveling and harrowing, prepare sets twelve inches in length, of varieties best suited to soil and purpose; drive them straight down nine inches into the earth, in straight rows, 24 x 24 or 24 x 12, according to variety and intended use, planting the small varieties closest.

The *salix* or willow family, consisting of some three hundred varieties, may, for ordinary purposes, be grouped into three comprehensive classes, namely:—1st, *The Willows proper*, with leaves smooth, almond-shaped, and more or less lanceolate and serrate; 2nd, *The Osiers*, with leaves soft, white, and downy on the under side, oblong, serrate and undulate; 3rd, *The Sallows*, with leaves soft, and downy underneath, round, serrate, and undulate. The botanist will divide the three classes into about three hundred varieties, and if you permit a grove of six or eight varieties to stand uncultivated for three or four years on land in good cultivation, you will soon be able to add new varieties to the list.

Class No. 2, Osiers are evidently intermediate between the willows proper and the sallows, having in some measure, characteristics of both. For basket-making, I do not grow more than six or eight varieties of class No. 1, viz. : *salix kirkia*, *s. purpurea*, *s. helix* and *s. discolor cuspidata*. Of class No. 2, *s. smithiana*, *S. mollissima* and *S. viminalis culis*. To be successful, the crop must be cut every