

GOOSEBERRIES.

THIS is a good fruit to grow for sale, as they can either be disposed of ripe or green—in which state they often give the best returns—or they may, in the case of the red varieties, be left until ripe. In Kent, England where large quantities are grown, they are generally gathered by women and girls, who earn good wages at the rate of 4d. per half sieve for green ones, and 2½d. to 3d. for ripe fruit.

Planting.—The best time for this as for all fruits, is when the leaves begin to change color; but any time between October and May will do if there is no severe frost or snow at the time. Gooseberries may be raised from cuttings in a similar way to black currants, except that gooseberries are best grown with a stem, from 6 inches to 1 foot high, to allow of digging, etc., underneath, and to keep the fruit from the ground, also to prevent so many strong shoots growing in the centre of the tree. The cuttings should, therefore, be not less than 9 inches in length, as 3 inches should be put into the ground and trodden in firmly. All the buds should be cut off gooseberry cuttings except three or four at the top, to prevent suckers springing up from the root. The distances for planting should be the same as for black currants. The gooseberry will thrive in a stony soil better than currants. The cost of planting per acre will be about the same as for currants.

Pruning.—For young bushes this consists in selecting six or eight main branches springing out evenly not far from the top of the stem. Thus, if the cutting throws out three or four shoots the first year they may be cut back to within 4 inches at pruning time, when each one will throw two or three good

shoots the next season, and enough may then be selected to form the future tree, keeping the centre open and cutting always to buds that point in the right direction for the branch to grow. Some varieties, and especially Warrington, persist in bending over towards the ground, and require pruning back well to get the main branches as upright as possible. All strong roots in the centre of the tree should be cut clean out and the small side branches cut off within an inch of their base, leaving one almost full length occasionally in the thinnest parts of the tree, and always leaving a good leader at the point of the main branches until they get 4 feet in height. Summer pruning is also of great benefit to the gooseberry. This consists in cutting out all young shoots in the centre of the tree and elsewhere which would otherwise be cut out at the winter pruning. By cutting them out in summer as soon as the fruit is gathered the remaining buds on the main branches get a better chance to ripen and store up nourishment for the next year's crop. The work is also much better done in mild weather than in the winter. In the Kent plantations gooseberries are pruned by the "tree cutters" in "piecework," during the short days of winter at about 1s. 6d. per 100 trees, according to size.

Cultivation and Manuring.—Like all other bush fruits, gooseberries pay well for an application of manure about once in two or three years. Night soil is often given to them in Kent, and materially assists in bringing very heavy crops of fruit to perfection. The soil is removed from under the bushes early in the spring, forming a basin-shaped cavity into which half a pailful of night soil is poured, and the next day the earth is put back again which had been removed.