

PLANTING AND CARING FOR YOUNG TREES IN AN APPLE ORCHARD.

(Concluded from May Number.)

Mulching.—When the tree is planted, spread around it as far as the roots extend, or a little beyond, a five or six inch covering of coarse stable manure, or other loose material which will act as a mulch. This is particularly necessary in dry soil or in a dry season. It prevents baking and cracking of surface soil and consequent escape of soil moisture from below, and at the same time maintains a uniformity of heat and moisture which is highly favorable to the formation of new roots.

Cultivation and Cropping.—One of the most important factors in determining the profits from an orchard is good cultivation. Sod should never be allowed around young trees. For the first five or six years, some hoed crop, such as roots, potatoes, beans or corn, may be grown in the orchard. The cultivation required to grow these profitably will keep the ground in good condition for the trees, while such crops will yield a return from the land until the trees themselves begin to bear. Never sow a grain crop in a young orchard unless a strip, at least as wide as the height of the trees, is left on each side of the rows and kept well cultivated.

The roots of a tree generally extend as far below the ground laterally as the top spreads above it, and they should be the sole occupants of the ground so far as they extend. Cropping between the rows, therefore, must gradually decrease as the trees increase in size, and should be discontinued altogether as soon as the trees fully occupy the ground.

Cultivation about the trees should never be so deep as to interfere with the roots. Shallow, level cultivation is much safer than plowing. By using the spring tooth cultivator to loosen the ground, and the broad share cultivator to keep the weeds down, plowing may profitably be dispensed with altogether.

Cultivation should commence in the spring as soon as the ground is fit to work, and be continued as often as is necessary until about the middle of August. If cultivation is stopped at that time the trees are more likely to cease growing and ripen up their wood so that it will not be injured by severe freezing. The frequency of cultivation necessary will depend much upon the soil and season. The aim of the cultivator should be to keep the surface soil loose and open, thus providing as a natural mulch and enabling the trees to withstand the injurious effects of drouth at any time.

Manuring.—Manuring an orchard in order to obtain good crops of fruit is often just as necessary as manuring a field to get a good crop of corn or roots. In a young orchard, where hoed crops are grown, the manure applied to grow these profitably will be all that is required by the young trees, as they will get their share of it. The vigor of the hoed crop will be a good indicator of the