

tinuance of dry hot air penetrating through the loose soil to the tender rootlets.

Of course, this rule of treading in or firming seeds after sowing must not be blindly followed. Very early in spring, or late in fall, when the soil is damp and no danger from heated dry air, there is no necessity to do so, or, even at other seasons, the soil may be too damp to be trodden upon, or rolled. In such cases these operations may not be necessary at all; for, if rainy weather ensue, the seeds will germinate of course; but, if there is any likelihood of continued drouth, the treading or rolling may be done a week or so after sowing, if it is at such a season as there is reason to believe that it may suffer from the dry, hot air.

Now if firming the soil round seed to protect it from the influence of a dry and hot atmosphere is a necessity, it is obvious that it is even more so in the case of plants whose rootlets are even more sensitive to such influence than the dormant seed.

Experienced professional horticulturists, however, are less likely to neglect this than to neglect in the case of seeds, for the damage from such neglect is easier to be seen, and hence better understood by the practical nurseryman; but with the inexperienced amateur, the case is different. When he receives his package of trees or plants from the nurseryman, he handles them as if they were glass, every broken twig or root calls forth a complaint, and he proceeds to plant them gingerly, straightening out each root and sifting the soil around them, but he would no more stamp down that soil, than he would stamp on the soil of his mother's grave. So the plant in nine cases out of ten is left loose and wagging, the dry air penetrates through the soil to its roots, the winds shake it, it shrivels up, and fails to grow, then comes the anathemas on the head of the unfortunate nurseryman who is charged with selling him dead trees or plants.

About a month ago I sent a package of a dozen roses by mail to a lady in Savannah. She wrote me a woful story last week, saying that, though the roses had arrived seemingly all right, they had all died but one, and what was very singular,

she said, the one that lived was the one that Mr. Jones had stepped on, and which she had thought sure was crushed to death, for Mr. Jones weighs 200 pounds. Now, though we do not advise any gentleman of 200 pounds putting his brogan on the top of a tender rose-plant as a practice conducive to its health, yet, if Mrs. Jones could have allowed her weighty lord to press the soil against the root of each of her dozen roses, I much doubt if she would now have had to mourn their loss.

It has often been a wonder to many of us who have been workers in the soil for a generation, how some of the simplest methods of culture have not been practiced until we were nearly done with life's work. There are few of us but have had such experience; personally, I must say that I never pass through a year but I am confounded to find that some operation can not only be quicker done, but better done, than we have been in the habit of doing it. These improvements loom up from various causes, but mainly from suggestions thrown out by our employes in charge of special departments, a system which we do all in our power to encourage.

As a proof of the value of such improvements which have led to simplifying our operations, I will state the fact that, though my area of greenhouse surface is now more than double that which it was in 1870, and the land used in our florist business one third more, yet the number of hands employed is less now than in 1870, and yet at the same time the quality of our stock is infinitely better now than then.

Whether it is the higher price of labor in this country that forces us into laborsaving expedients, or the interchange of opinions from the greater number of nationalities centering here that gives us broader views of culture, I am not prepared to state; but that America is now selling nearly all the products of the greenhouse, garden, nursery, and farm, lower than is done in Europe, admits of no question, and if my homely suggestions in this matter of firming the soil round newly planted seeds or plants will in any degree assist us in still holding to the front, I shall be gratified.

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