The Farm

Timely Articles by the Ontario Department of Agriculture, Toronto

WINDOW AND VERANDAH

Brightened With Flower Boxes and Hanging Baskets.

The Boxes Must Be Strong and Durable—The Soil Should Be Kept Rich and Well Watered — Hints on Arrangement of Plants.

(Contributed by Ontario Department of Agriculture, Toronto.)

Window boxes should be made strong and durable. Each box should be nine or ten inches wide at top and bottom, seven or eight inches deep inside measurements of a suitable length to fit the window, not over four feet in length, made of one-inch dressed lumber, and when finished painted a dull green color. Half-inch holes should be bored about six inches apart through the bottom of the box for drainage purposes. Verandah boxes should be about the some measurements. A large iron screw eye, or iron staple, should be put at each top, outside (front) corner of the window boxes. A strong piece of wire should be attached to these long enough to attach to another screw eye or staple placed in the window frame about a foot higher up than top of box, so that the box can be fastened securely in position. Boxes and barrels may be made more artistic and rustic looking by nailing moss and fungi covered bark, of native trees, on the outside. This not only adds to their attractiveness but also helps to keep the plants moist and cool at the roots in summer time. The bark from Basswood, Elm, Cedar or Birch trees will be found suitable. By the exercise of a little taste and originality, very pretty boxes can be made at slight cost. Verandah boxes and rustic stands can be made in something the same way. One of the prettiest rustic stands I have ever seen was made from the lower half of a sugar barrel, reinforced by a thickness of half-inch board nailed on the bottom of the barrel outside to strenthen it, with three-quarter inch holes bored through for drainage purposes.

Hanging Baskets.

Wire hanging baskets lined with green moss or sphagnum moss are very effective, especially for a sunny position. The clay baskets dry out very quickly and are better suited for a shady position than a sunny one.

Soil.

The soil for window boxes must be rich in fertilizers if the best results are to be obtained. It is a good plan to put an inch in depth of well rotted barnyard manure, or dry cow manure, near the bottom of each box, before filling it up with the prepared soil. About an inch in depth of soil may be placed in the bottom of the box first, and the fertilizers named spread over it, or about half a pound of bone meal may be used as a substitute for the first named fertilizers. These fertilizers will help sustain plant growth late in the season when the soil has become exhausted. One part sand, one part leaf mould (black soil from the bush) and seven or eight parts of light loamy soil well mixed, with two parts of either of the fertilizers named added, will make a good soil for window boxes, rustic stands, etc.

The best time to fill window boxes is when they are to be placed in position toward the end of May or early in June. The boxes may be set in position and well secured, before they are filled with soil or plants, as they are heavy and difficult to set in position when filled.

Arrangement of Plants.

Tall growing plants should be placed at the back of the box nearest the window. Dwarf plants and trailing plants should then be put around the front and ends of the box. Any space between these in the centre of the box should be filled with medium height plants. It is a good plan to first fill the box nearly level full with with soil, then stand the plants on the surface where they are to be planted finally. By doing this the plants can be changed about and rearranged, and a good idea of the arrangement and effect desired can be obtained before finally planting them. For color effect, for instance, too much of any one color, especially the heavier colors, should not be placed in any one part of the box, whether of dwarf or tall plants, as there would not then be a proper balance of color, something that would detract from the effect considerably. By standing the plants on the surface of the soil before planting as mentioned, any change required can be easily made. Use bright colored plants mainly whether of foliage or flowers, and if possible, make use of good sized plants. Boxes filled as described at the time of setting out, will do much better than boxes filled indoors early in the season. Boxes filled very early indoors, often get shabby as soon as they are set out, and sometimes become positively unsightly before the summer season is half over.

Care of Boxes.

Window boxes, etc., require copious and frequent waterings every day, or at least every second day, especially during hot weather. The soil should be well soaked with water when watering the boxes. Toward the end of the season, in July and August, some liquid fertilizer may be given the plants.—The late Wm. Hunt, O. A. College, Guelph.

E. G. Bennett, of Missouri, says: "When you sell grain you wholesale the fertility of your soil; when you sell butter-fat you retail water, feed and sunshine."

Popular Varieties of Strawberries.

From the beginning of commercial strawberry growing, about 1800, the Large Early Scarlet was the leading variety grown in the United States. About 1860 the Wilson replaced this variety, because it was much firmer and was more suitable for shipping to distant markets, and its hardiness and good bearing qualities helped to make strawberry growing more popular in Ontario. From about 1880 varieties began to replace each other in more rapid succession, until at present 25 sorts constitute about 90 per cent. of the total commercial strawberry acreage. The Klondike, the leading variety in the Southern States, heads the list, constituting 28 per cent. of the total strawberry acreage. The Aroma, the favorite variety in the South Central States, is second with 13 per cent. of the total acreage, while the Dunlap in the Northern States ranks third, with 10 per cent. In Ontario among the most popular varieties commercially are the Glen Mary, Williams, Dunlap, Gandy, Splendid, Parsons, and Sample. Among the fall bearers the Superb and Progressive are preferred.

Feeding the Cow Before Calving.

The proper time to begin feeding a dairy cow is six or eight weeks before calving, and practical dairymen agree that this preparation has more to do with the amount of milk and butter fat which a cow produces during the lactation period than does the feeding during any other period.

For cows calving during the summer or early fall most dairymen like to have a small pasture away from the herd but with an abundance of grass, and, in addition, they like to feed a suitable grain mixture. Corn silage, with clover or alfalfa hay and a limited grain ration of three parts ground oats, two parts of bran, and one part of oil meal is especially good for cows calving during winter or early spring. After calving the cows should be brought slowly up to full feed and thereby steadily to a higher production.

Feeding Young Chickens.

Young chickens should be fed from three to five times daily, depending upon one's experience in feeding, says the United States Department of Agriculture. Undoubtedly chickens can be grown faster by feeding five times daily than by feeding three times daily, but it should be borne in mind that more harm can be done to the young chickens by overfeeding than by underfeeding, and at no time should they be fed more than barely to satisfy their appetites and to keep them exercising, except at the evening or last meal, when they should be given all they will eat. Great care must be exercised not to overfeed young chicks that are confined, as leg weakness is apt to result.

Playing Whist for Canada.

When Mr. Labouchere was an attache at Washington he went down with his chief to a small inn in Virginia to meet Mr. Marcy, the American Secretary of State, for the purpose of discussing a reciprocity treaty between the United States and Canada. Mr. Marcy, usually the most genial of men, was as cross as a bear and would agree to nothing. Mr. Labouchere thereupon asked that Minister's private secretary to tell him, in confidence, what was the matter. "He is not getting his rubber of whist," was the answer. After that the British representatve proposed every night a rubber of whist, which he invariably lost. Mr. Marcy was immensely pleased at beating the Britisher at what he called "their own game," and his good humor immediately returned. "Every morning," said Mr. Labouchere, in relating the incident, "when the details of the treaty were being discussed we had our revenge and scored a few points for Canada."

CARE OF THE TRACTOR

Practical Advice About Running This Farm Machine.

House the Tractor—It Must Be Kept Clean—Be Careful In Lubricating With Oils and Grease — Air Cleaning.

(Contributed by Ontario Department of Agriculture, Toronto.)

In the year 1893 the Hart-Parr Co. built their first tractor. During 1910 there were about 1,300 tractors sold in the United States, and in 1920 this number was increased to 175,000. This year the sales are greater than the total for the past ten years, many dealers being sold out in the first four months of the year. These figures are a pretty fair indication that the tractor is taking its place as a farm implement. Farm implements generally have a very short life, and tractor depreciation is usually reckoned at from 20 to 25 per cent.

Housing.

A good tractor deserves the best of protection and when not in use or stored for the winter should be in a shed that is weather tight. If it is to be left in the field over night it should be covered with a waterproof canvas to properly protect the wiring, magneto, etc.

Cleaning.

Exposure is not by any means the only ill-treatment to which a tractor is subjected. Have you not often seen them so covered with dirt and grease that you wonder how they can carry the extra load? If the work of carrying it was all it would not be so bad, but the great trouble with these dirt accumulations is that sooner or later the grit is going to work into the bearings and get into the carburetor, with the result that you have ground-out bushings and scored cylinders. To clean off these accumulations each day will take but a few moments and pay you well. To allow them to stand for a week or so means that the heat of the engine will burn them and make their removal a very difficult matter.

Lubricating.

Oil in a gas engine or tractor serves three purposes: 1, general lubrication; 2, compression seal in the cylinder; 3, cooling

For each part of an engine that requires oil there must be an adequate supply or that part is going to fail sooner or later. It has been said that not one man in a hundred knows every oil hole on his tractor. This is nearer the truth than may be imagined, and part of the fault lies with the manufacturer who places oil holes or grease cups in places where it would almost require a detective to find them. You must study your oiling chart, and then follow the system of oiling as laid down in your tractor manual. Give the manufacturer credit for knowing the oiling needs of his product. Oils and greases should be bought most carefully. Each manufacturer will tell you what oil to use in his particular machine. The reason different tractors call for different oils is because they differ in construction, speed and operating temperature. To make sure that you are getting the oil recommended, buy it in sealed containers.

Mechanical Oilers.

Some tractors are equipped with mechanical oilers. In these cases fresh oil is constantly supplied to certain parts. These oilers work so well that they are often forgotten. Not long ago a tractor operator heard one of his cylinders blowing gas past the piston. On examination it was found that the piston was dry and badly scored. Further examination revealed the fact that the little pump in the oiler which should have been supplying oil to that cylinder had stopped working. The oiler was drained and washed out well with kerosene. Then it was turned out and fresh oil put into the oiler. It was again turned by hand and again that particular pump did not work. The oiler was now removed and taken apart when, after quite a careful search, a small bit of chaff was found in one of the fine oil passages. The bit of chaff would let the thin kerosene pass but stopped the thick cylinder oil.

Equal care as to cleanliness should be observed as to greases. If grit is on your hands or whatever you are using to fill the grease cups with, you may be sure you are going to have scored bearings. In filling the cups see that there is no air left in them and then turn them down until you see grease squeezed out of the bearing. This makes sure that it is getting where it will do good. It is wasting money to buy a low grade grease because they consist mainly of a low grade soap and a large amount of water and will freeze. Cheap greases also contain acid fats and are certain to spoil the highly-finished surfaces of anti-friction bearings.

Air Cleaning.

Do not neglect the air cleaner. If water is used, for example, it should