

PREPARATION OF THE SOIL.

For profitable growing on a large scale, select a piece of well-drained clay loam. This should receive a heavy coating of manure in the spring and then be either summer-fallowed or planted with potatoes, vegetables, or some other early crop which can be removed in time to permit of a proper preparation of the land in autumn before it becomes too wet with heavy rains. A sub-soiler should follow the common plough, one that will stir up the sub-soil to the depth of 5 to 10 inches without bringing any of it to the top. Sub-soiling is not absolutely necessary, but land thus loosened up will retain moisture longer in time of drought and dry off much more rapidly after heavy rains. The last ploughing in the fall should be thoroughly done and suitable furrows provided, so that all surface water may run off quickly. Early in the spring, as soon as the weather and the condition of the soil will permit, cultivate deeply, both lengthwise and crosswise, with a two-horse cultivator; harrow down smooth and the land will be ready for planting. Avoid plowing a heavy soil in the spring for immediate planting.

Gravelly or sandy loam should be heavily manured in the spring, and may be planted with vegetables. All weeds should be kept down during the summer. Plough in the fall and again in the following spring, and harrow thoroughly. No subsequent tillage will make up for inadequate preparation of the soil for strawberry culture. A stiff clay loam is more difficult to manage. A crop of clover or other green manure turned under will help to make the soil more friable. Coarse barnyard manure should also be used whenever it can be applied in time to decompose and become well mixed with the soil before planting. Tile drains in such soil require to be much nearer together and should not be too deep, usually not more than two and a half feet. In the autumn, before the land becomes too wet, trench it up in high, narrow ridges; if done with the plough, turn two furrows together, forming a sharp ridge, as when prepared for carrots or other roots. Surface drains should be made to take off surplus water quickly. When thus exposed to the action of the frost, a comparatively heavy soil will work down fine and mellow in the spring and give good results. Care must be taken, however, never to stir such soil when wet, either with hoe, plough or cultivator.

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To precede the strawberries, a heavy clover sod is desirable, as this can be turned under and will not only provide a large amount of plant food, but it will so add to the humus in the soil that there will be far less danger from drought.

Sod land is not desirable, as it is generally deficient in humus and plant food and frequently contains insect larvæ, which may prove destructive to the plants. Almost any of the hoed crops may be used for one year previous to setting the plants and will leave the land in good condition for the strawberries, especially if it was heavily top-dressed with stable manure in the spring, or fall previous to planting. Few soils will give the best results without the use of manure or fertiliser of some kind, and if the manure can be applied to the land at least once a year before it is to be used for the strawberries, it will decompose and will be in a suitable condition to yield up this plant food.