

STRAWBERRIES.



It took me ten years to learn to grow strawberries, so that a good crop of fine berries could be depended on with reasonable certainty every year. The three principal reasons were varieties not suited to my soil, lack of potash in the ground, and allowing the plants to stand too thick. Of a good many varieties tested thus far, the best four, all things considered, are Jessie, Haverland, Bubach No. 5, and Sharpless, in the order named. Our strawberries, following a crop that has been grown on a well-manured clover soil, need no fertilizer except potash, and this is supplied by a moderate dressing of unleached wood ashes. The plants are set in April, just after growth has begun, in rows four feet apart, and two feet in the row for vigorous growing varieties, and eighteen inches for those that do not throw out many runners. My experience is that to produce the finest berries, the plants in the matted row should be six to eight inches apart. Not one farmer in a hundred will take the pains to thin them, and I am not that one, but I can approximate to these distances by thin planting. The past season being so extremely dry just at the time the sets should be forming, we failed to get a good stand of plants. But this is the first time it has occurred, and we shall not abandon the thin planting just at present.

Before setting, the ends of the roots are taken off by a slanting cut with a sharp knife. All dead leaves are picked off. The most satisfactory method of planting we have ever tried is to stretch a line lengthwise of the plat, one man sinks a spade near the line at an angle of about forty-five degrees, and raises the handle nearly straight up, while another straightens out the roots, dips them in water, and puts the plant behind the spade in a natural position, with the crown a very little below the surface. The first then withdraws the spade, and firms the ground by treading firmly just in front of the plant. As a rule, not more than one plant out of four or five hundred fails to grow. Almost immediately the cultivator (with narrow steels) is started, and the whole of the surface is stirred every time we cultivate the garden or after every rain. No fruit is allowed to set the first season, and the runners are kept off until about the first of July. Sets are then allowed to root in a row about two feet wide, care being taken to always pass with the cultivator the same way so as not to disturb the young plants.

I have never heard of clover straw or haulm being used for the winter mulch, but find it an excellent thing for this purpose. The broken straw and chaff sifts down among the plants, and the coarse straw above serves to shade them and hold the snow. In spring, the coarse straw only is raked off and the rest is allowed to remain on the rows to hold the moisture and keep the berries clean. We hire all the berries picked and sell nearly all of them direct to