

GARDEN AND ORCHARD.

FOR THE RURAL CANADIAN.

WALKS IN THE GARDEN.—IV.

APRIL is a busy month in the garden. The snow is gone, and the prudent man, who has ridged up his ground in the fall, will find it light and friable, owing to the pulverizing effects of the frost, and will often see his seeds sprouting from the ground, before his neighbour, who has not been so forehanded, can put a spade into the saggy soil. The manure which was put on in the fall will be more intimately blended with the earth, and in a better condition to be assimilated by the roots of the plants. No digging will be required, merely throwing down the ridges with a fork; and a rake will not be necessary, except to level the surface.

In most seasons many seeds can be put in during the first week in April, though this year, owing to the depth that the frost has penetrated, it may be a little later. The first seeds to be planted are onions, spinach, peas, beets, carrots, parsnips, salsify, and parsley. There need be no fear of getting any of these in too early. They will all stand any frost they may have to encounter, and the earlier they are planted the sooner the first crop may be expected, as a rule.

For onions, the ground cannot well be too rich, as long as the manure is well rotted, and it should be near the surface, as the roots of onions penetrate but a very short distance. Those who are fond of young onions, and who is not, should put in a pint of shalots or potato onions. They are necessary ingredients in salads. A quart or more of set onions should be planted at the same time. Both should be put in rows a foot apart, and four inches apart in the rows. The black-seeds should have the same distance between the rows, which, indeed, is about right for all root crops, to allow easy cultivation, and should be sown thickly, as the seed is not always sure, and the young ones can easily be weeded, and where they can be disposed of will realize more money than the main crop. Onion seed should be very lightly covered with soil.

The worst enemy that onion growers have to contend with is the maggot, which attacks the bulb when about the size of a pea, and eats away the substance. They can be detected by the wilted appearance of the tops, and there is, so far as I am aware, no remedy; at least, I have never been able to save the crop with any treatment I could discover. For this reason many persons are discarding the black seed altogether, and growing from sets exclusively. This is a much easier plan, but the bulbs do not keep so well, being apt to rot as the winter advances. Care in harvesting and storing, however, will obviate this to some extent. Onions, whether seed or set, should be thoroughly cultivated, and not a weed allowed to escape. They need all the nutriment there is in the soil, and none of it should be wasted on weeds. A top dressing of ashes or soot, or both, will be found very beneficial.

SPINACH, carrots, beets, parsnips, and salsify all want rich, deep soil, and should be covered about an inch deep. They should be cultivated as soon as they can be seen distinctly, and except the first, thinned out to six inches apart. Two thinnings are better than one—the first when two or three inches high, and the second when large enough to be of some use in the kitchen. The lighter the soil, the better the roots, provided it is rich, indeed it is useless to try to grow well-formed parsnips and salsify on very heavy clay—the latter will fork so as to be more trouble

to clean for the table than it is worth. Spinach may be sown as a catch crop, where cabbages, tomatoes, etc., are to be planted, as it will be over about the time they are ready.

If the soil is not sticky—and if it is seeds should not be planted at all—it should always be made firm around the seed when it is planted. Many pat the ground with the back of a spade or run a roller over it after sowing, but there is nothing better than the sole of the foot, and it is very ready. If this is not done the dry air penetrates to the tiny rootlets when they begin to sprout, and destroys their vitality. For the same reason, when plants are set out the soil should be pushed round them closely with the foot. A large proportion of failures, both with plants and seeds, is due to neglect of this simple precaution, especially on light soils.

The main crop of potatoes can wait till May, but it is as well to plant a row or two towards the middle or end of April. If they escape the frost they will be ready for use early in July, when they will be most appreciated. I always grow a few of the old Ashleaf Kidney, and can use them the last week in June. They have no market value, being small and not very productive, but they have a flavour peculiarly their own, and are fit to use when as large as pigeon's eggs. Whenever potatoes are planted, they will repay a careful preparation of the soil more than most people imagine. Merely opening out a ditch with a hoe and throwing the earth back again over the tubers is not enough. The trench should be about a foot wide, and the earth made as fine as possible. The cultivators of a Planet Jr. Wheel Hoe do it to perfection. If one takes the trouble to put about two inches of soil on the tubers, and then an inch of manure, and soil on that again, he will have no reason to regret it. I think that cutting the sets to two good eyes gives the best result.

LETTUCE may be transplanted to the open ground from the hotbed as soon as the ground is ready, there is very little danger of freezing it. It is hardly worth while to have a separate place for lettuce. The plants can be set here and there among raspberry or currant bushes, or wherever there is a vacant spot. Those who have never grown Cus lettuce should do so. In flavour and crispness it is much preferable to any of the cabbage kinds.

If the raspberries and blackberries have been buried—and those which were not this winter will, I am afraid, yield very little fruit—if they are alive at all they should be dug out and straightened up as early as possible. Broken pieces should be cut off, and if stakes are used the canes should be tied up at once. One handling is less trouble than two. The wheel hoe should be run through them, and the early weed growth killed, just as soon as it starts, but care should be taken not to go more than two inches deep, to avoid cutting the roots. Not more than six or eight sprouts should be allowed to grow, the rest must be hoed down as weeds.

THERE are a good many flower seeds that can be sown in April. Poppies, zinnias, marigolds, phloxes, asters, and nearly all the perennials can go in as soon as the ground becomes a little warm. Most annuals that are sown early will bloom as soon as transplanted from a hotbed, but more seed is required. If you have not time or inclination for much flower gardening, at any rate try a package of mixed seeds or "wild garden," such as are now sold by almost all seedsmen. The results will surprise you, and

probably induce you to go more into the ornamental line another season.

To those who have hotbeds, pricking out is a very necessary operation. There is nothing growing under glass that is not improved by one or two shifts before being planted in the open ground. Tomatoes, peppers, egg plants, and such semi-tropical plants had better be shifted from one part of the bed to the other, as too sudden a change of temperature to a cold frame checks and stunts them. The bed used for lettuce and radishes is a good place to put them. Other things, such as most flower plants, cabbage, cauliflowers, etc., can be transplanted into a cold frame, the glass being kept on during cool days.

THE temperature of the hotbed should be watched. A thermometer should be hung on the inside, and the mercury never allowed to go above ninety degrees. A few minutes' neglect may cook all the vegetation. At the same time care should be taken not to go too low, as a cold wave is just as bad as a hot one. A little experience will accustom one to regulate the temperature by opening or closing the sashes. The surface of the soil should never be dry, but at the same time too much moisture should be avoided, as the damping off of the tender vegetation is a general trouble. This, too, must be learned by experience.

How few people, comparatively, know anything about asparagus. They may occasionally buy a few stalks at the market, but they are tough and tasteless, and very dear. No one ever enjoys asparagus except from his own garden or that of a friend. Tradition has a great deal to do with the scarceness of asparagus beds. The old way of making them, handed down from generation to generation, involved trenching to a depth of a couple of feet or more, and the loading of the soil with manure, with other instructions enough to frighten an ordinary mortal. In reality an asparagus bed is a very simple matter. Spade the soil to a fair depth, and have it rich and friable. Make drills four feet apart, sow the seeds two inches apart and an inch deep. Keep the weeds down, and in the fall put on a thick coat of well-rotted manure—that from the hotbed is just the thing. Next spring, thin the plants out to eighteen inches, keep clean during the summer, and in the fall give some more manure. Next summer you can begin cutting the "grass." You are just about as far ahead as if you had bought the plants. It is an open question whether salt is necessary. It does not do any harm, however, and enough can be put on to check the weeds without hurting the asparagus. There is not much difference in the kinds. Conover's Colossal and Argenta are in every catalogue, and are both safe. Y.

CLOVER is an excellent green manure for renovating the soil, but it is not adapted to every use. A young orchard will be almost ruined by seeding to clover, and a bearing orchard will often be seriously injured. For young apple orchards old enough to produce fruit, but which persist in growing more wood instead, seeding down is sometimes beneficial. It checks too rapid growth and thus induces fruitfulness. One reason why clover as green manure is so injurious to orchards is that it is not generally ploughed under until the trees are in full leaf. This is a great check to their growth, and the subsequent rotting of the clover sod stimulates an excessive growth late in the season, which does not ripen its wood and is liable to be winter killed. This alternate check and stimulation is especially injurious to pear trees and is apt to cause blight.