

If there is a tendency to dryness, a light covering of hay or straw may be put over the manure until it is time to put on the soil, after which the straw is removed. The mycelium should begin to run in about two weeks, or less if it is good, and sometimes the soil is not put on until it is seen as a white, cobweb-like growth extending in different directions from the pieces of spawn. If it can be avoided, the bed should not be watered at all, as watering, especially shortly after spawning, often causes injury. It is best to keep the floor and walls damp, the moisture given off from these furnishing the soil with enough. If the room is very dry, lightly watering the bed with tepid water may be done very occasionally, but there is danger of rotting the mycelium from watering. A covering of hay over the bed will help to keep in the moisture until the mushrooms come. The growing of mushrooms during the summer months is not satisfactory, as maggots are very troublesome and difficult to control. If the bed is prepared in the fall the mushrooms should appear in seven or eight weeks and the bed continues bearing for from two to three months, but results with mushrooms are very uncertain. The amateur sometimes obtains a good crop, and other times there is failure, although apparently the same treatment is given.

FORCING RHUBARB IN WINTER.

The forcing of rhubarb in winter should be much more general than it is. With very little trouble an abundant supply of this appetizing vegetable can be had in the fresh condition from the middle of January until spring, if desired. A few good sized crowns or pieces cut off the plants in the garden will furnish enough stalks for a family. As the crowns or plants from which the stalks are to be forced have received the necessary nourishment during the season, it is not necessary to plant them in soil when forced, although soil may be found the most convenient material in which to put the plants as the roots must be kept moist for best results. Excellent results have been obtained by filling in between the roots with moss which is kept moist. Even coal ashes about the roots will be found satisfactory. The plants are dug just before winter sets in and before being put into the cellar they are left somewhere to freeze solid. An exposure of frost for from ten days to two weeks is desirable, as they force more quickly afterwards if they have been frozen. The plants are now put close together in the cellar for forcing, either in boxes or on the floor. They may remain in total, or almost total, darkness while being forced. Though they are forced in the dark the colour of the forced rhubarb is a very attractive shade of pinkish red. The one lot of plants will continue to throw up stalks for six weeks to two months, or until the roots are exhausted, but to ensure a supply until spring some roots may be kept frozen and not forced until the first lot is ready for use. The temperature at which the rhubarb is forced should not be very high. Between 50° and 60° F. is a good range, and rhubarb will force at even lower temperatures. The time the rhubarb is ready for use will depend on the temperature of the cellar.

If it is desired to grow plants especially for forcing, seed of the Victoria, Linnaeus, or some other good variety should be sown thinly and about half an inch deep early in the spring. If several rows are sown they should be from two to three feet apart. When the plants are well up they should be thinned out to about six inches apart, and then the ground kept well hoed or cultivated throughout the growing season. If the conditions are favourable they will make strong plants by autumn from which some of the stalks the following spring would be large enough to eat. It is not, however, desirable to cut any stalks from those that are to be used for forcing. After the second season's growth the seedling rhubarb plants will be large enough for forcing.