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Our School Department.

Hints on Teaching.

By GEO. W. HOFFERD, M. A.
Pruning Fruit Trees.

Only a few of the more apparent principles involved in pruning can be presented to a Form III. class. No doubt some of them have observed that it seems to be part of the proper care of an orchard. Here, then, is the starting point. A visit to a well-kept orchard in the community where some of the reasons for judicious pruning may be pointed out, would be most profitable. Observe where the pruner has cut out branches and twigs, and cut back leaders. Imagine what the tree would have looked like if this pruning had not been done. Based on observation, emphasize a few of such objects of pruning trees as, (1), It makes the cultivation of the soil around the trees easier by having the branches near the ground cut away. (2), The tree is so pruned that no branches are growing across through the top which may prevent the sunlight and air getting at the fruit. What is the advantage of pruning so as to form a well-balanced tree? (3), Pruning lessens the number of apples, but improves the size, quality and attractiveness. Why? (4), Pruned trees do not exhaust themselves as much as unpruned trees, hence the former are likely to bear more regularly. "It does not exhaust a tree as much to bear a good crop of fine fruit as it does to produce a heavy crop of small fruit, as the exhaustion of the tree is more in proportion to the number of seeds matured, than to the size of the fruit." (5), Have the larger branches been cut close to the trunk, or leading branches? There should be no stubs left, and the larger fresh cuts should be covered with paint or grafting wax to prevent rotting. What will cause the rotting? (6), Has the orchard been pruned before? How can you tell? Pruning should be done regularly so that any one pruning may not be severe. Why? Young orchards need practically none until they begin to bear fruit. (7), Pruning is usually done in March. Why not do it about the first of June when growth is vigorous so that the wounds will heal over quickly? In British Columbia summer pruning is practiced.

in regard to lessons on the moulting hen were published in the issue of December 4, 1919.

Preparing for Winter on the Farm.

November is a busy yet interesting month on the average farm. There are always odds and ends of work to be finished up before the snow flies, and very often there is a week or two of exceptionally bright, sunny weather which is suitable for nut gathering, and getting the flower gardens and shrubbery in condition for the winter. There is plenty for the boys and girls to do in the way of finishing the apple picking, gathering up the vegetables, and storing them away for winter use. Very often the parents have not time to do many of these little jobs, which are not too heavy for the boys and girls. In storing the vegetables, it is a good plan to bury carrots, beets, etc., in sand, as it tends to keep them firmer and fresher for use during the winter. If the cellar is too warm for the proper keeping of vegetables and apples, it would be interesting to pit these crops. If you have not done so before, start on a small scale. Select a high and dry place in the garden, remove the loose earth to a depth of four or five inches, lay a little straw in the bottom and build a mound of potatoes or apples; then cover with good layer of straw, and a light coating of soil. It is well to place a tile in the top for ventilation; in fact, this tile might advantageously extend down towards the centre of the mound so that a person could lower a thermometer occasionally during the winter to ascertain the temperature in the centre of the pit. As frosty weather approaches more earth should be put over the pit, and then if there is danger of the temperature in the pit approaching freezing point, straw manure could be used. One must be careful to prevent the vegetables or apples from freezing, and yet not give so heavy a covering that they will heat and spoil. The amount of covering depends a good deal upon the severity of the winter and the snowfall.

POULTRY EQUIPMENT.

A lesson or two on this topic is much needed in rural schools, for practically all farms support a few hens. Unfortunately, they receive little or no consideration. They get their food at irregular intervals wherever they can, often destroying parts of the grain crop near the farm buildings, and lay and roost wherever they can. The result is the egg production is low; the birds are wild, and of inferior quality; and boys and girls see little or no kindness, and care shown these farm animals. Where such is the case these November days make the proper winter care and housing an important topic.

Conduct the lessons so that some home discussions may arise. Some members of the class may be asked to tell the others how poultry is housed at their homes. Then take up the need and requirements of a good chicken house. How large should it be to properly house 100 hens? Study with the pupils the diagrams given in Farm Poultry, Bulletin 247, Ontario Department of Agriculture. It would be well to get this bulletin for each pupil so that he may use it himself and take it home to help out discussions there. Where hens are kept during the winter on a farm what kind of foundation should a poultry house have? What kind of a floor and what care should it be given? If the floor is cement, what covering should be provided? Should the poultry house be kept clean? How? Why? Discuss the arrangements necessary for light, warmth, and ventilation. How often should hens be fed, and how much at a time? What provision must be made for their water supply? Name some diseases hens are subject to. Often there is a big loss caused by a disease breaking out in a hen house. Remove sick hens from the flock. Aim to find the cause of the trouble and remove it.

The moulting hen is also a listed subject for discussion this month. Hints

Around most homes there are some flowering shrubs, a perennial border, and possibly a bed of tulips. If there isn't, then for very little expenditure the home surroundings could be considerably improved by planting out some flowering shrubs, perennials, etc. Some of these may be secured from a neighbor, or may be purchased at a seed store. Perennials are easy to grow, require comparatively little attention, and give an array of beauty year after year. These may need a little attention in the fall, as protecting the roots against frost with a covering of straw manure. Some of the tender shrubs may need to be covered with old canvass or sacking. Some shrubs and vines that are very tender are not only wrapped in sacking but are laid on the ground and covered with straw. These are some of the things which the boys and girls can do, and it should be interesting work to anyone who likes flowers.

Those who have a flock of pullets should have them in winter quarters by now and be giving them extra attention if winter eggs are to be gathered. The pen does not need to be too warm, but it must be dry and well ventilated. In order to force the birds to take exercise the grain part of the ration should be buried in about a foot of dry straw. Scratching for the feed keeps the blood circulating and warms up the body, which is better for the birds than having the body heated by external heat. Poultry men have found that it is a good plan to keep a dry mash of rolled oats and bran before the birds; then an occasional wet mash, fed hot, is recommended by some. It must be remembered that the birds require green feed and meat, besides the grain, and then they cannot produce eggs unless they are given material from which to make the shell. Cabbage, mangels, beets, or turnips, make excellent green feed, and skim milk will supply the meat ration, or beef scraps may be purchased.

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