

The Protection of Strawberries

Brenda E. Neville, Cottonwood, Saskatchewan

STRAWBERRY culture is in its infancy in Saskatchewan. Only last July mine was the only exhibit of strawberries shown at Regina. I stood near the small fruit exhibits, and listened to comments. Many people passing the strawberries remarked: "Of course such fruits cannot be grown here; they are imported." Such is the opinion of the majority. Only a few people know that every farm garden might have its strawberries as well as cabbages.

Strawberries should be set in spring, to allow them the most time possible to become well rooted before winter. The greatest difficulty we have to contend with is dry weather, in the fruiting season, and in the fall.

During the summer the greatest care should be used to prevent any exposure of the crowns of the plants to the hot dry winds. Cultivation should be kept up all summer, but the soil should not be stirred to any depth after August.

If the fall season is very dry, a little artificial watering will help. The water should be given in the evening, and the ground thoroughly soaked, not just sprinkled. About a day and a half after the watering, cultivate on the surface. It will be beneficial to water in this way once a week till the ground commences to freeze hard at night.

MULCHING

As soon as the ground freezes well, so that it does not soften through the day, a light, loose covering of clean wheat straw should be applied. Do not make the covering very deep at first. Wait for a good fall of snow. When that has settled and become a little hard with a few "40 below" nights, then put on a covering fully ten inches deep of more wheat straw. If it is hard to keep the straw from blowing away, spread a little brush over it.

It is not the cold in winter that kills strawberries. It is the alternate freezing and thawing in spring that does the harm. Therefore, do not remove the strawberry covering too early in spring. It will be late in the spring, perhaps well on in May, before the ice is melted underneath the straw. Feel under the straw once in a while, and as long as ice remains or the ground is frozen, leave the straw alone. When the ground finally thaws out, remove the straw very gradually. Separate it over the plants first to let in the air. Quite a lot of straw may be left between the rows until after the fruit ripens. It keeps the fruit clean, and shelters the plants from the winds.

As spring frosts are prevalent here, rather late varieties of strawberries should be chosen, so that they will not bloom before the damage of frosts is

over. Senator Dunlop and Bederwood are two of the best for our climate.

Fall Cultivation

R. W. Starr, Wolfville, N. S.

I have been advocating for many years the system of fall cultivation of orchards, believing it to be the best method. I will give a few reasons why orchards should be cultivated and fertilized in the autumn, wherever possible.

By plowing say five or six inches deep after the leaves have fallen and harrowing to a fine tilth you have an "earth dust mulch," which is one of the best protections from frost. You will have buried all the spores of the black-spot which may be deposited on the leaves, which is undoubtedly the main source of propagation in the spring. You will also have disturbed, and buried deeper, any cocoons of canker worms, codling moth and other insect pests that may harbor on or near the surface soil. And you will have placed the cover-crop or other vegetation, with the leaves, where it will be converted into plant food, and made ready for the early growth of the trees in the spring.

If you apply such fertilizers as barnyard manure, ground bone, muriate of potash, or others of those partially insoluble commercial manures and harrow in, you will assist nature to provide the trees with an early spring breakfast and enable them to commence the season with vigor and pass the period of what is sometimes excessive, bloom, without the exhaustion that we frequently observe, and that is followed by failure to set fruit, or by excessive dropping after it is set.

If this system is properly carried out in the fall, the disk is all that is required in the spring to get a mellow surface, and if it or the harrow are used, say, once a week to conserve the moisture, until the time has arrived to sow the cover crop, the orchardist may congratulate himself when the latter is in that his work for the season, so far as cultivation is called for, is done.

As there can be no rule without exceptions, it may be found practicable to follow this system on side hills or where the soil washes badly in the winter. There you may have to leave the cover crop to bind the soil until spring; if so,

then do your cultivating and manuring at the earliest possible date, for it is the early and vigorous growth in the spring, and the mature, well ripened wood and buds in the fall, that ensures the health of our fruit trees through our changeable winter weather.

A Terraced Peach Orchard

Editor, THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURIST: It has been stated that an amateur should not attempt fruit growing until he has gained some experience. It may be of interest, therefore, to some of your readers to know that, coming from Central Africa where I was engaged in an entirely different occupation, I have, as the accompanying illustration shows, so far made a good start.

In this orchard there are 1,500 peach trees besides apple, cherry, plum and pear trees. The terraces shown are each 990 feet in length. The peach trees are



A Twenty-acre Orchard, Peachland, British Columbia

Note the terraced hillside.

eighteen feet apart and the terraces are the same in width. The trees are planted in the middle of the terraces. The lower side of each terrace is planted in lucerne; only the top side is cultivated, being frequently harrowed and also plowed twice a year. For this purpose, I find the spring-tooth harrow far better than any other implement. It cultivates deeper than others and will stand very rough work.

The terraces were made because the hill was too steep to work. They face the east and get the early morning sun and warmth. Terracing means good drainage; also, the snow collects there and does not drift away.

The trees have done remarkably well, many showing over six feet of growth for the past season. This I attribute to constant cultivation. The trees were irrigated only once during the year. I believe in severe pruning to make a tree strong enough eventually to yield twenty boxes of fruit.