

Strawberry Culture in a Poor Soil.

Of all garden fruits the strawberry is most highly esteemed, and it is certainly worthy of its high position as the general favorite. Perfectly hard, very fragrant, and the choicest and most highly flavored kinds, however delicately constituted, being equally amenable to the simple method of culture that suffices for the sturdy or robust, it might reasonably be expected that an abundance of fine fruit would be the general rule or result, and not so frequently the exception as it is. A variety of reasons might be adduced for such frequent failures, or rather partial successes, but it will be enough for my purpose if I take that which I think is more generally applicable than any other—namely, ignorance of the real requirements of this plant, leading to an untimely and, I fear in some instances, slovenly system of culture. If it can be fairly called a system at all, it is not at all uncommon, when looking at fine crops of strawberries, to hear such exclamations as, "Ah! my soil will not produce such fruit as this." To this I have only to reply, that strawberries of old kinds may be cultivated perfectly well, and with little, if any, difficulty, in the poorest soil; and to impress this as clearly and forcibly as I can upon many who evidently would like to succeed, I cannot do better than state something of my own experience.

The garden of which I now have the care is a new one, and a very short time ago its site formed part of an extensive wood, a remnant, probably, of that huge forest which for hundreds of miles thousands of years overspread so much of the counties of Sussex and Hampshire. After clearing away the trees the soil proved to be very shallow, and of the poorest description it has ever been my lot to cultivate. Starved and exhausted by successive generations of trees, it was about as ungenial a staple for strawberry culture as could be found. The portion selected for the first strawberry bed was trenched about eighteen inches deep, laid care not to bury the surface soil, but only turning it over, and chopping it to pieces; then six or eight inches of rich farmyard manure was spread over it, and well worked in with forks. The strawberries were next planted, and well watered until they became established in their new quarters. This was done late in autumn, yet, notwithstanding the whole of the plants survived the winter, and made a respectable showing in the next spring, most of them throwing up some flower-trusses, which were promptly removed. An occasional dose of liquid manure was given during the summer, more manure forked into the soil between the rows early in August, and in the following summer of 1892, a full crop of fine fruit was taken. Meanwhile other beds were made in a similar manner, and in the present season the entire crop of fruit has been in size and abundance to compare with any I have seen in those rich loamy soils which so many of us vainly sigh for.

Thus it will be seen that no very scientific appliances or uncommon skills were necessary to produce such desirable results, only the ordinary care and painstaking that most other crops require. The only difference that has since been made is to plant as early in June or July as is practicable, so as to have the plants sufficiently established to produce an early crop of fruit in the next season. Plants that have been forced in pots are in every respect to be preferred, because they yield a full crop next season. Failing such, excellent beds may be made by using the earliest seedlings from established plants, and even when plenty of forced plants can be secured, an annual bed of the young runners or offsets is very useful, as the fruit, being less shaded by the foliage than that on the older plants, ripens earlier, and thus lengthens the season. Another important point is always to destroy exhausted beds. No strawberry plant will continue in full bearing longer than two seasons. It is true that fruit may be taken for several years from the same plants, but such fruit is invariably of a paltry description, quite unfit for the dinner table.

To reduce these notes to the form of a few simple rules, it may be stated that—
1. The soil must be drained, stirred deeply, and thoroughly manured.
2. The plants, if forced pots, should be planted in June, or if not, as early in July as they can be served from the old plants, taking care that they do not suffer from want of water, either there or at any subsequent period.
3. Immediately after the fruit is gathered give a liberal dressing of rich manure, forked slightly into the surface between the rows.
4. Destroy the old beds after the second, or at most the third, year of planting.
5. Let your beds be large enough to enable you always to supply the finest-picked fruit for the table, the aim being that every dish of fruit shall be fit to compete for a prize. The small fruit is always as useful for culinary purposes as the large.

HUSBAND AND WIFE IN ILLINOIS.—The following are some of the prominent features in the bill repealing the law in relation to husband and wife, which has passed both branches of the Illinois legislature: "A married woman may in all cases sue and be sued without joining her husband with her, to the same extent as if she were unmarried; if sued with her husband, she may defend for her own right; if he neglects to defend the cause, she may defend for him, and vice versa; neither party shall be responsible for the debts of the other; contracts and liabilities incurred by the wife may be entered against her the same as if she were unmarried, but she cannot enter into partnership with another person without the husband's consent, unless he be idiotic or insane, or in the penitentiary, or has abandoned her; one cannot sue or recover compensation for services performed for the other; one shall not convey property to the other without a conveyance in writing, to be recorded in the same manner as chattel mortgages; the expenses of the family and the education of the children shall be chargeable upon the property of both or of either, and in relation thereto they may be sued jointly or separately."

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