

Agricultural Department.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, Mar. 17, '69

Preparing the Soil for Apple Trees.

Few soils in their natural state are in a suitable condition for the reception of apple trees. New land is certainly far preferable to that which is old and partially or wholly worn out, but neither are in a proper condition for an orchard, and some thorough system of preparation should be applied to them before being used for fruit trees. The method of preparing soils should be varied according to their nature; if naturally deep and rich, then a good, deep plowing is all that will be absolutely necessary. But those persons who are about planting a young orchard should not forget that years of time may be gained by bestowing a little extra care at the start, and that trees in a thoroughly prepared soil will be as far advanced in five years as those which receive but ordinary care will be in ten.

All soils, whether now or old, rich or poor, light or heavy, should be worked deep, for herein lies the fundamental principle of all good and successful gardening; and good farming and orcharding is but gardening extended. It is not always necessary or advisable to invert to a great depth, and thereby throw the poor subsoil on the surface, but to loosen up the soil to a depth of one foot or more is beneficial to all crops, no matter how small or delicate.

There are soils which do not require deepening, but they are the exception and not the rule; consequently, we leave them out of the list under consideration at this time. We will suppose, for instance, that a farmer wishes to plant an apple orchard this spring upon soil that is rich enough for the purpose, without applying any fertilizing materials whatever; and, further, we will suppose that he knows enough about apple trees not to plant them in a swamp, or in ground so stony that it cannot be cultivated, neither will we expect him to turn over an old sod that has not been plowed for years, and use such land for an orchard until the tough roots of grass and weeds have become, at least, partially decomposed. But we expect that our farmers will plant the trees in the best soil on his farm, provided it is favorably situated and is naturally dry and good.

The first thing to be decided is the distance apart at which the trees are to be planted—whether twenty-five, thirty, or forty feet; the second number will afford room enough for varieties of moderate growth, but where the land is very rich and not too expensive, more space may be allowed.

Lay out the ground by driving a stake at each end of the space to be occupied by a row of trees, then plow the lands into beds of the same width as the rows are apart, commencing exactly in the middle between the rows, and back-furrow until the entire space is plowed, finishing with a dead-furrow just where the trees are to be planted. Plow as deep as possible in the deep furrows; going through three or four times will do no harm, but much good.

Proceed in the same manner, until the land to be occupied is all plowed, then put on the harrow and pulverize the soil as thoroughly as possible, then plow it again, and turn the land back into its former position.

If a more thorough preparation can be afforded, then the land may be cross-plowed in the same manner. By adopting this system of preparation, the soil is broken up fine, and left with an even surface, while its great depth will be just where the trees are to be planted. If the first plowing can be done in the fall of the year it would be better than doing both in spring, or if the trees are to be planted in autumn, let the spring plowing be done with reference to this subject, and throw up into beds accordingly.—Some of our orchardists recommend throwing the land into beds, and planting the trees on the ridges, but this plan we do not consider a good one, because it necessitates the keeping of the lands in beds, or the roots of the trees will soon become exposed. Level of culture is always preferable in a climate like that of the United States, and if the land is too wet to admit of it then it should be underdrained, as this is far cheaper in the end than to be continually throwing up beds for the rains to wash down again.

If the soil to be used for an orchard is heavy clay, then subsoiling, as well as plowing, must be resorted to. If good results are to be expected, digging deep and wide holes for the reception of trees is a system almost universally recommended in this country, but in some cases out of ten, these holes are but the receptacle of water, which collects from the surrounding soil, and does more harm than good. We like the idea as well as the practice of deep culture, but want the soil all deep, and if we cannot secure this, then a wide deep furrow across the entire field is far better and more readily obtained with a plow than a little deep soil under each tree. If manure is required, then it may be applied to the dead furrows after the first plowing, and thoroughly mixed with the soil at the second. This is our system of preparing ordinary good soil for an apple orchard. We like it, and others may, by giving it a trial.—*Hearth and Home.*

Soap suds should never be wasted on the lawn, but should be poured for the garden.

Asparagus.

From the 20th of March to the 1st of April, the asparagus beds should have the coarse part of the manure with which they have been covered during winter taken off, and as soon as dry enough the rest carefully forked-in, all clods removed and the top-soil nicely pulverized with a rake. A dressing of coarse salt—fish salt will answer—should be applied the first week in April. The ground should be well covered with the salt, but care must be taken that it does not come in contact with box-edging, plants and small trees, as it is fatal to them.

In setting out new asparagus beds, let them be two or two and a half feet apart each way, the crowns of the roots being from three to four inches below the surface. The soil should be at least eighteen inches in depth and made as rich as it can be. Apply no salt until after the plants produce a crop, which will be the third year.

Beds can be made as early in March as the season will admit of, but care must be taken to perform the work in the best manner.

There is no reason in the world why every farmer and family having a garden should not have an asparagus bed. There is no superior to it, and it comes before we can get anything else, except spinach and cauliflower; the latter, however, is both troublesome and costly. When an asparagus bed is once established, and regularly covered in the winter with a good coating of rich manure, and salted in the spring, it will last, without other trouble and expense, from twenty-five to thirty years.—*Germantown Telegraph.*

Diseases of Farm Stock.
A correspondent of the *Journal of Agriculture* proposes the following question to the readers familiar with chemistry in its applications to vegetables and animals:

"The idea has been suggested in some of my readings, that the multiplying of diseases among all kinds of farm stock may be owing to the fact that certain qualities of ingredients which are always found in virgin soils, and which are essential to the healthy development of animal organisms, have become so far exhausted that the vegetation—the food now produced is deficient in those elements, and hence these various diseases.

Is there any ground for this theory? Is it possible that iron, for instance, which forms so important a part of the animal structure, may be abundantly supplied to vegetation growing on virgin soil, and through it, to cattle, and yet may, by long cultivation, be so entirely absorbed from the soil that the vegetation growing there will be entirely destitute of that element? I do not believe this theory, nor do I entirely disbelieve it, it is easy to see that there may be many grains of truth in it.

Dentists tell us that one cause of tooth decay in early life is because the system is not supplied with proper food to form enamel. The same general law may apply to domestic animals. Who can tell?—*Rural N. Yorker.*

The Best Position for Grapes.
Some persons think that grapes ripen best on trellises, others prefer arched; some approve of keeping the vines high, and others advocate low training. Who shall decide when doctors disagree? We had an opportunity this year of seeing at least some of these positions tested, for a Hartford prolific vine of ours, which was planted against a board fence in a corner of our garden, for the purpose of covering an arbor or summer house, bore heavily, some of the bunches being on the canes which were trained against the fence, some on those which covered the side of the arbor, and some on the top or roof.

MISCELLANEOUS.

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