

COLUMBIAN SUPPLEMENT.

Bloomsburg, Pa., Friday, February 18, 1887.

Raising Strawberries.

HOW TO PREPARE THE GROUND FOR THE CULTIVATION OF THIS LUSCIOUS FRUIT.

My first advice in regard to strawberries is to set them out immediately almost anywhere except upon land so recently in grass that the sod is still undecayed. This course is better than not to have the fruit at all, or to wait for it. A year without strawberries is a lost year in one serious respect. While there is a wide difference between what plants can do under unfavorable conditions and what they can be made to do when their needs are fully met, they will probably in any event yield a fair supply of delicious fruit. Secure this as soon as possible. At the same time remember that a plant of a good variety is a genius capable of wonderful development. In ordinary circumstances it is like the "mute, inglorious poet" whose enforced limitations were lamented by the poet Gray; but when its innate powers and gifts are fully nourished it expands into surprising proportions, sends up hundreds of flowers, which are followed by ruby gems of fruit whose exquisite flavor is only surpassed by its beauty. No such concentrated ambrosia ever graced the feasts of the Olympian gods, for they were restricted to the humble *Fragaria vesca*, or Alpine species. In discovering the New World, Columbus also discovered the true strawberry, and died without knowledge of this result of his achievement.

I can imagine the expression on the faces of those who buy the "sour, crude, half-ripe Wilsons," against which the poet Bryant inveighed so justly. The market is flooded with this fruit, because it bears transportation about as well as would marbles. Yes, they are strawberries; choke-pears and Seckels belong to the same species. There is truth enough in my exaggeration to warrant the assertion that if we would enjoy the possible strawberry we must raise it ourselves, and pick it when fully matured—ready for table and not for market. Then any man's garden can furnish something better than was found in Eden.

Having started a strawberry patch without loss of time wherever it was handiest, we can now give our attention to the formation of an ideal bed. In this instance we must shun the shade of trees above and their roots beneath. The land should be open to the sky, and the sun free to practice his alchemy on the fruit the greater part of the day. The most favorable soil is a sandy loam, verging toward clay, and it should have been under cultivation sufficiently long to destroy all roots of grass and perennial weeds. Put on the fertilizer with a free hand. If it is barn-yard manure, the rate of sixty tons to the acre is not in excess. A strawberry plant has a large appetite and excellent digestion. It prefers decidedly manure from the cow stable, but that from the horse stable answers very well, but it is not advisable to incorporate it with the soil in its raw, unfermented state, and then to plant immediately. The ground can scarcely be too rich for strawberries, but it easily can be over heated and stimulated. In fertilizing ever keep in mind the two great requisites, moisture and coolness. Manure from the horse stable, therefore, is about double in value as well as bulk if composted with leaves, muck or sods and allowed to decay before being used.

Next to enriching the soil the most important step is to deepen it. If a plow is used, sink it to the beam, run it twice in a furrow. If a lifting subsoil-plow can follow, all the better. Strawberry roots have been traced two feet below the surface.

If the location of the plot does not admit the use of a plow let the gardener begin at one side and trench the area to at least the depth of eighteen inches, taking pains to mix the surface, subsoil and fertilizer evenly and thoroughly. A small plot thus treated will yield as much as one three or four times as large. One of the chief advantages of thus deepening the soil is that the plants are insured against their worst enemy—the drought. How often I have seen beds in early June languishing for moisture, the fruit trusses lying on the ground, fainting under the burden, and the berries ripening prematurely into little more than diminutive collections of seeds! When ground has been deepened, as I have said, the drought must be almost unparalleled to resist the development of the fruit. Even in the most favorable seasons hard, shallow soils give but a brief period of strawberries; the fruit ripens all at once, and although the first berries may be of good size the later ones dwindle until they are scarcely larger than peas. Be sure to have a deep, mellow soil beneath the plants.—E. P. Roe, in *Harper's Magazine*.

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