

The Amateur's Small Fruit Garden

A SIX YEAR STRAWBERRY BED: No garden is too small for a strawberry bed and no product of the garden will give more satisfaction. Many amateurs do not realize that it is impossible to buy berries in the market like those one can raise at home. Strawberries should be picked with the dew on them, to be at their best. Furthermore, the berries that have the finest flavor will not stand shipment, and so are not grown by the commercial strawberry man.

It is quite possible to fruit a little bed in the garden for at least six years. A piece of land that has been cultivated for several years should be chosen, because sod ground contains too many grubs and is not easy to work. It should be made fine and smooth and the plants should be set a foot apart, in rows two and a half feet apart. They may be planted from March to June.

The best plan is to mark the row with a line, then to scoop out a little hole large enough to hold the roots when spread out. If the plant is held between the thumb and second finger just below the leaves, it may be twisted rapidly, thereby opening up the roots. If the season is at all dry, it is well to pour water on the roots before any dirt is thrown in and then to fill the hole and pack the earth solidly around the plant, so solidly that if a leaf is pulled it will break off before the roots yield.

As the plants come up, they should be allowed to grow together in the row, but must be religiously kept from spreading to the sides. Likewise, the blossoms must be kept picked the first season, so that the plants may get well established. Cultivate for a few minutes once a week, to keep the bed free from weeds and to loosen the soil. After the first few weeks the hoe must be kept very near the surface; if it goes below two inches, it will be likely to injure the roots.

Usually, there is not much need of cultivation after the first of September, until just before time for the ground to freeze. It should then be thoroughly loosened and pulverized with the hoe and covered with a mulch of hay, straw, leaves or cornstalks. Two inches is deep enough, the purpose being to prevent the plants being heaved out of the ground by the action of the frost. In the spring, the hay or straw may be raked between the rows and around the plants in such a way as to keep the berries from becoming covered with dirt.

The third year the bed should be renewed by making the soil between the rows very fine and starting new plants in the middle of each row, from selected runners. The following year, the old bed may be plowed or dug up after it has produced what berries it will.

It is impossible to give any satisfactory advice about varieties, for strawberries are exceedingly whimsical. There is no garden in which some variety will not grow, and probably no garden in which every sort will grow. The best plan is to learn from an experienced grower in your section what kinds thrive there. It is also well to have an early

and a late variety in order to insure a long season. In this connection, remember that some varieties are imperfect and will not set fruit unless there is a perfect variety near to pollenize them. Those marked in the catalogue Staminate are perfect or self fertilizing; those termed Pistillate must be grown with a perfect variety near by.

Of late years, there has been much interest shown in fall bearing strawberries, which makes it possible for one to have strawberries from his own garden practically all summer. These remarkable berries will sometimes fruit even up to December, in spite of frosts. Moreover, spring set plants will give a crop of berries the same season.

Ordinarily, these strawberry plants give a scattering crop all through the season; but in order to have a lot of berries when berries are scarce, the flowers should be picked up to the first of August. About four weeks later, there will be a full crop of fruit and the plants will continue to bear until the end of the season. The berries are large and excellent in flavor.

RASPBERRIES AND CURRANTS: It is a very small garden indeed in which a place can not be found for a few raspberry and currant bushes—say, a dozen of each. Both are easy to grow and there is now an ever-bearing raspberry, so called, which may be depended upon to yield fruit for three months. And currants, unlike most small fruit, may be allowed to hang on the bushes a long time after they ripen.

The red and the purple raspberries both should find a place in the home garden; while the former are unexcelled for the table, the purple varieties are superior for canning. The Black Caps may be grown, too, if there is room in plenty. Some people think they make the best pies.

Raspberry plants should be set out just as early as possible in the spring, and sharply cut back. The ever-bearing variety will produce some fruit the first season. It is best to set raspberry plants about two feet apart in the home garden, with six feet between the rows, if double rows are planted. Every spring the shoots should be cut back one-third, and after the fruiting season is over, the old wood should be cut out. Many new shoots will come up and a large proportion of them are best removed.

The fruit produced next season will come on the canes grown this year and these canes will then die. That is the reason for cutting out all the old wood each summer; and if done without delay, any insects or fungi that the wood may be harboring can be destroyed by burning. If more plants are needed, it is necessary only to dig up some of the new shoots either in the fall or spring. There will be no need of buying plants after the first purchase. Blackberries may be treated in the same manner as raspberries, but need more room.

Currants differ somewhat from raspberries, bearing their fruit on the same wood for several years. Nevertheless, all

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Do NOT Forget the Children!

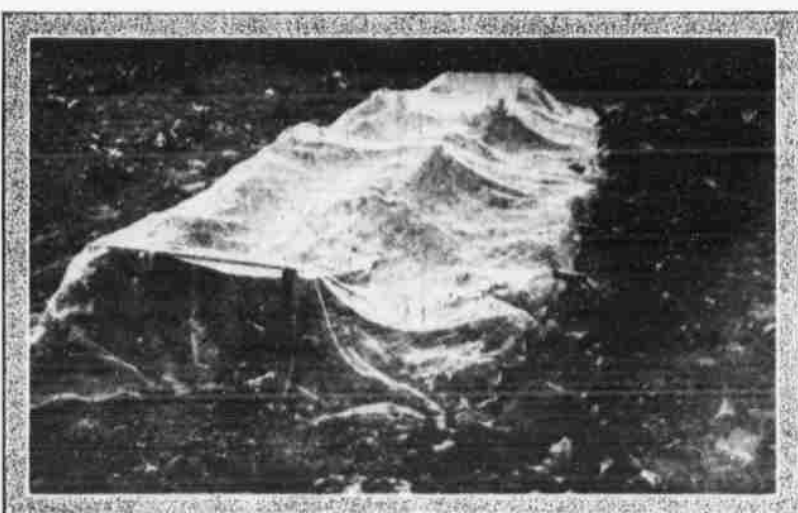
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