

FRUIT AND FLOWERS

FORCING FOR FLOWERS.

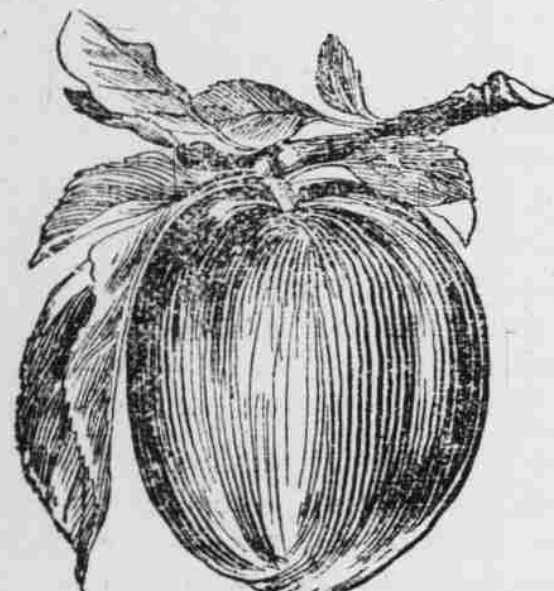
Helpful Hints to Amateurs Gleaned from Popular Gardening.

Inexperienced persons presume that plants may be taken out of the open ground at any time that frost permits and placed in strong heat at once. To succeed with most hard wooded plants they should be placed in a cool apartment to enjoy a season of rest before forcing. The roots must form first, which will sustain the new growth of leaves and young branches. Many shrubs bloom very early in spring, and these, as a rule, are preferable for forcing operations. As their flowering season is of short duration it is advisable to keep a stock on hand to draw from, as a number have ceased forming flowers.

All bulbous, tuberous and fibrous rooted herbaceous plants are governed by the same laws, and after potting must be preserved in a cold pit or cellar until needed for forcing. Having such a stock to draw from every fortnight or so, succession of bloom may be kept up in our greenhouses or living rooms all winter long. Roses are especially sensitive regarding strong heat soon after removal from open air; they must be permitted to form roots first.

A Promising Seedling Apple.

Apple growing has not heretofore received much attention among the varied fruit industries of California. Gradually, however, it is coming forward, and it is claimed for the foothill regions of some of the mountainous counties that they produce a considerable quantity of apples of the best size, color and flavor. California Fruit Grower, from which our cut is taken, names as the most trustworthy of the older varieties Red Astrakhan, Benoni, Alexander, Gravenstein, Fall Pippin, Yellow Bellflower, King of Tompkins County, Roxbury Russet, Smith's Cider, Winesap, Rhode Island Greening, Rawles' Janet, Ben Davis and Yellow Newton Pippin, and of the newer varieties which have proved good keepers, Arkansas Black, Delaware Red Winter Lankford, Shackleford, Huntsman, Clagton and Mammoth Black Twig.



MARSHALL'S RED APPLE.

Among the California seedlings Marshall's Red, Skinner's Pippin, Cook's Seedling and Sexton's Golden Seedling receive special mention. Of these, Marshall's Red is pronounced the best by the authority quoted, which says of it: "It is a seedling, a supposed cross between a Yellow Bellflower and Red June, having the size and shape of the former and deep crimson color of the latter. The quality is fine and the tree is a prolific bearer. The original tree was first fruited in 1877 and the variety named and introduced to the public in 1884. It has since proved adaptable to a widely diversified territory."

Winter Protection.

Winter protection is necessary in many sections, but the plants do not require smothering. Hardy shrubs can stand the cold if planted in proper locations, and half hardy ones require only little protection. Many of the half hardy ones require protection more from wind than cold, and all that is required is to tie a few branches of spruce or other evergreen boughs loosely around them. Perennial plants will sometimes be thrown out by the frost if not protected, and the object of the covering is not to keep the plants from freezing, but to keep the heavy frosts out of the ground bed.

Another object of winter protection is to keep the sun off. The alternate freezing and thawing is very injurious to the vitality of the plants, and it must be avoided. Some plants can be bent over in trenches and pegged down, which will protect them from the cold and sun. The Everblooming roses must be treated in this way or be taken up in the fall. The covering of the soil around the roots of the plants should be done before cold weather is here, but the other kind of protection may be postponed until late in the season.

Unfruitfulness of Trees.

There are many reasons for the lack of fruitfulness in plants. A tree may fail to produce flowers, and therefore no fruit can subsequently follow. The plant may be laden with bloom and still no fruit result. In such a case it is possible that one of several circumstances may bring about the result. The pollen if defective will not fertilize the seed vessels. This is well illustrated in some varieties of strawberries that are called pistillate, because the stamens are abortive. There may be a lack of insects for the transfer of pollen from one flower to another, and the pistils fail to enlarge and develop seeds.

When heavy rains come at the time the flowers are in full bloom there are many reasons why the fruit fails. The insects are not so active, but most of the pollen grows before it reaches the proper place, just as the wheat may germinate in the sheaf or while standing in the field during the wet weather. If the pollen grows, that is, sends out its tube while in the stamen, it must fall to serve its purpose.—American Agriculturist.

BLINDNESS AMONG HORSES.

Its Causes and Something About Prevention and Proper Treatment.

It has been stated that blindness is more prevalent among horses in America than among those of other countries. If this is the case the causes of the evil should be investigated and removed if possible without delay. It is the fact that blindness is more prevalent among horses in Ohio than those of any other section of the country. The cases of blindness are attributed in a great measure to overfeeding, the Ohio horses being notoriously fat. It is a common practice to force the fat upon horses intended for sale by stuffing them principally with Indian corn, and keeping them without service in warm, close stables.

This method of feeding soon fattens a horse, but at the same time its digestive functions are injured by the treatment. It is now believed that blindness can be traced to a sympathetic relation between disorder of the digestive organs and the brain, and that through the latter the optic nerve becomes diseased and ends in destroying the vision. Blindness is also frequently transmitted to offspring, and thus an evil, first originating in disease, almost becomes a natural defect by hereditary descent. Errors in feeding horses, as is well known, also produce blind staggers and organic disease of the brain, therefore the greatest care should be exercised in feeding them.

In order to prevent the spread of horse blindness it is recommended that whenever the animal shows the least symptoms of the disease it should be kept on a light diet of hay and oats. A horse may be maintained in good condition on twelve pounds of hay and five pounds of oats for daily feed. In breeding horses it is also recommended that all animals showing the least symptoms of organic disease be rejected.

One of the first symptoms incident to blindness, which any person may readily notice, is the disposition of the animal to raise his forelegs unnecessarily high, while, at the same time, the ears are drawn back and forth in quick succession, and thus giving sure evidence that the sagacious animal is sounding the ground over which he travels. These are the principal ideas advanced by most veterinarians respecting the cause of prevalent horse blindness in our country and a mode of arresting the spread of the evil. There are some other causes of this disease which appear more evident, any of which are perfectly capable of removal. Blind horses are more common in cities than in the rural districts. This is principally caused by bad stables. Many of them are underground cellars, and with few exceptions all stables are too small. They do not admit a sufficient quantity of fresh air for ventilation and respiration, and this always tends to injure the health of the animals. Light is as essential to the health of horses as that of men, and yet most stables are nearly as dark as dungeons. It would be far better for most of the horses in our cities to be kept in open sheds than in the stables commonly provided for them.

I am also positive that eyeballs in the harness tend to injure the eyes of horses, and as they are totally useless and unsightly appendages they should be abandoned entirely. The open bridle has become more common, but it should be universal. Tight, close collars, which squeeze the eyes of horses in putting them on, are also very injurious to the eyes of the animals. I have known one case of permanent injury to the eyes of an excellent horse from this cause. Carriage and draft horses should be provided with divided collars, secured either at the top or bottom, so that they are not required to be forced over the heads of the animals.—New York World.

How to Tell Iron from Steel.

A writer in the Glasgow Engineer, in pointing out some of the most practicable data in testing iron and steel, lays down a simple rule to start with—namely, that in any case where a fracture of iron gives long, silky fibers of a leaden hue, the fibers cohering and twisting together before breaking, it may be considered a tough, soft iron. Further, a medium, even grain, mixed with fibers, is a good sign, while a short and blackish fiber indicates badly refined iron, a very fine grain also denoting a hard and steely iron, which is apt to be cold short and hard to work with the file. Again, coarse grain with a brilliant crystallized fracture and yellow or brown spots, denotes a brittle iron, cold short, working easily when heated and welding well.

Nitric acid will produce a black spot on steel—the darker the spot the harder the steel—while iron, on the contrary, remains bright if touched with nitric acid. Good steel in its soft state has a curved fracture and a uniform grey lustre, but in its hard state a dull, silvery, uniform white; a good steel will bear a white heat without falling to pieces, and will crumble under the hammer at a bright heat, while at a dull red heat it may be drawn out under the hammer to a fine point.

The Marvelous Power of Tree Growth.

Washington and London correspondents give the reasons of the wonderful power of tree growth in 1881 the commissioner of city property took up with the good idea of marking the trees. It was shown that the growth of the trees would either force the labels from their staples or else cause them to stand out in a horizontal line. The commissioner at once had the staples drawn, but for all this in some cases the labels have been torn from their hinges, while others stand out from the trunks as if they were intended as platforms for birds to rest on.

The soft cells, as soft and tender as a mushroom when growing, have yet power enough with ease to lift these metallic plates by the edge and force them into a horizontal position. Any one could lift one of these to such a position if the finger could be gotten for a half inch under the plate, but imagine the force which a sort of yeast like substance must possess, which, getting under but perhaps the sixteenth or eighth of an inch, can yet elevate the plate to a perfectly horizontal line.—Thomas Meahan in Philadelphia Ledger.

FARM FIELD & GARDEN

GRASS AS A FARM CROP.

Its Importance in the Farm Rotation Fully Set Forth.

The value of grass as a farm crop ought not to be wholly estimated from its use as a fodder plant for grazing or haying, says the agricultural editor of the New York World. Primarily it is chiefly valued as furnishing animal food, and from the ease with which it may be grown with a minimum amount of cultivation it is well worthy of all the attention and care that can be bestowed upon it in the selection of varieties and study of their adaptability to the different climates and varying soils. One of the advantages of a grass crop is the large proportion always gathered by animals themselves, without the intervention of harvesting labor and harvesting machinery. Another is that the harvesting and storing away of a portion as hay is a process that insures its preservation in the best form at a small cost and with the least amount of loss.

Pasture and hay grasses and clovers should therefore not only be leading farm crops, but special care should be taken to grow them on land where, from the peculiar nature of the soil, they can be made the most profitable crops such soils can produce. It will readily occur to any farmer that rough and hilly lands of small acreage value are to be preferred for pasturage to rich, arable soils; not because the latter would not yield the most grass, but because the grass the former may be made to yield will be almost clear gain, and the richer land can also be put to a more profitable use than pasturage. Notwithstanding all that has been said in favor of feeding soiling crops raised on rich lands, in lieu of pasturage, the fact still remains that our animals are chiefly raised and brought to maturity on pasturage, and that most farms, whether large or small, have portions better adapted to grass than to grains and vegetables.

Again, grass is an improver and not an impoverisher of soils, and for this reason, in connection with its intrinsic value as animal food, should enter into farm cultivation far more extensively than it does. If the wornout lands of the country, wherever they may be, are ever again to be classed as having any considerable value, the renovating agent must be grass. A few years of intelligent and systematic cultivation of the grasses best adapted to them, along with the raising of sheep, it is believed would again restore to usefulness and make salable many farms now looked upon as having little or no value.

Experiments in Pig Feeding.

It is well known that corn is the chief fattening food for pigs in a large part of the United States. Experiments which were made during three years are reported in full by the Illinois station, showing the feeding value for pigs of corn, of corn and grass, of grass alone, the comparative value of soaked and dry corn, the value of droppings from cattle and of apple pomace in feeding pigs. In eight trials in which corn alone was fed, aside from salt and coal slack, pigs varying in weight from 65 to 290 pounds, kept in pens or small lots without grass, gained at the rate of from 10.46 pounds to 14.73 pounds per bushel, the average gain being 12.36 pounds per bushel of shelled corn. The rate of gain for food eaten and the food eaten in proportion to weight decreased after four or six weeks' feeding with corn only. There seemed to be no constant relation between the weight of the pigs or the season of the year and the food eaten or the gains made.

In four trials, pigs fed all they would eat of shelled corn, with blue grass pasture, gained at the rate of 12.04 pounds per bushel of corn. Pigs under like conditions, except that they were fed but half as much corn, gained at the rate of 12.03 pounds per bushel. Pigs in dry lots fed shelled corn gained at the rate of 10.52 pounds per bushel. In no case did pigs make satisfactory gains after six or eight weeks' feeding on corn alone.

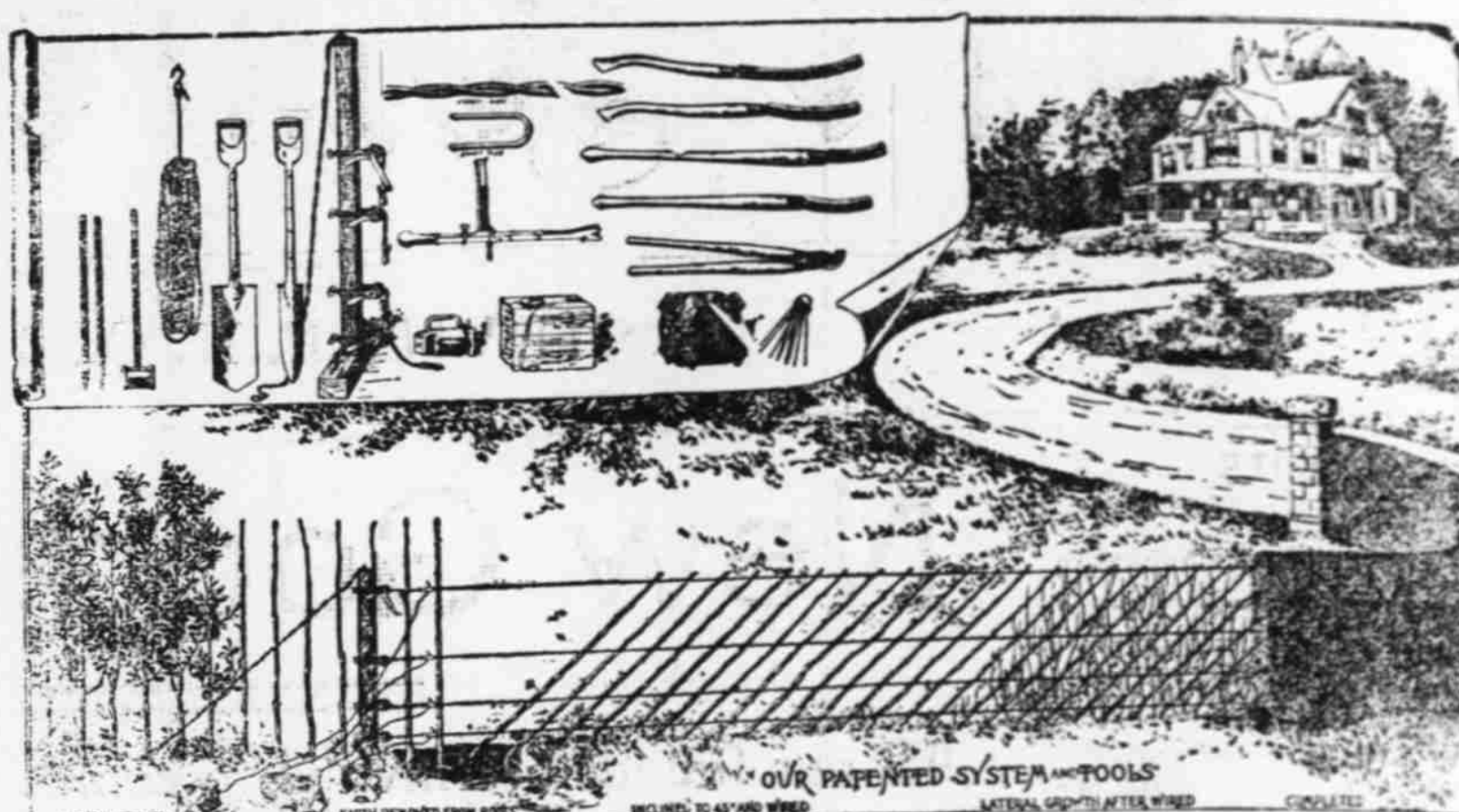
In two trials pigs fed soaked corn ate more and gained more than those fed on dry corn, but the difference was not great. Two pigs in a two-acre pasture lot with three yearling steers were fed corn, and gained in twenty-four weeks 195 pounds. In a second trial under like conditions two pigs gained 231 pounds in thirty-one weeks; the gain in neither case being large. A trial of apple pomace as food for pigs resulted unsatisfactorily; the pomace kept well, but the pigs ate but little of it. A short experiment made it so evident that it is unprofitable to confine pigs to a grass diet solely that further trials in that direction were not made.

Green Bone for Poultry.

A subject much discussed among poultrymen at present is whether it is profitable to feed green bone. A Massachusetts poultryman writing in Farm-Poultry expresses himself very emphatically that it is. He says: "I selected a pen of 100 Brahma hens, procured a bone cutter and went to work. The result was, my number of eggs was increased more than half, the 100 hens laying only a few short of 1,800 eggs during the month of February 1891, thus proving that the bones an egg producer alone was invaluable. But in order to find whether the only advantage was in the increase of eggs I concluded to test the matter still further, and placed some of the eggs mentioned in an incubator directly beside others where no bone had been fed. The result there was equally as favorable. Many of the eggs where no bone had been fed proved infertile, while others started and died at all stages. But not so where the bone had done its work. Ninety per cent. of the eggs brought out strong chicks. I have tried green bone to my entire satisfaction, and feel that I can recommend it to others."

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