



What Farmers Want to Know

By W. F. MASSEY

Sweet Cherries Falling

SOUTHEAST VIRGINIA: "I have some sweet cherry trees which always drop the fruit and never ripen. What is the trouble?"

The difficulty is climatic. Sweet cherries always fail from your section southward, except in the high mountain sections. You can grow sour cherries like Montmorency and Early Richmond. The sweet cherry trees grow finely in North Carolina, but do not fruit east of the upper section near the Blue Ridge.

Ashes Worth Hauling

"I CAN get for the hauling the ashes from hickory wood. Some of them have been rained on. It will cost probably 50 cents a ton to haul the ashes. Will it pay to take them and what crop should I use them on?"

Of course, the ashes which have been rained on will have lost some potash, but the ashes will be well worth the hauling for the lime alone, as they contain about 35 per cent of lime in the best shape, and some phosphoric acid too. Spread them at the rate of a ton an acre on a sod to go in corn.

White Sweet Potatoes

"WILL you please tell me which is the best variety of white sweet potatoes? I have been growing for quite a while some white ones, but they do not get soft as they should, and I thought you might tell me of a better."

The only white-fleshed sweet potato of the yam class that I know is the old Spanish. I do not know where these can now be had, though nearly every one in the sweet potato growing section of east Virginia grows them for home use. I rather suspect that you have the Hayman, a whitish-skinned potato with yellow flesh. This is a poor potato in fall and early winter, but gets soft and good in the spring. There is a light-fleshed potato in North Carolina known as the White Barbados or "White Bayduses." This is grown around Raleigh. They are known in Virginia as Tolman Spanish.

Everbearing Strawberries

NORTH CAROLINA Mountains: "I have a bed of everbearing strawberries which seems to stand still. What can I do in cultivating or manuring?"

To get much result from the everbearing strawberries, I find that they should be treated as annuals. Set the plants in the spring and keep the bloom off till June, then let them bear the remainder of the season. The next spring let them make the dull spring crop, and then turn them under, for they do little fruiting if allowed to make the spring crop. I have dropped the everbearing strawberries as not worth growing. I have tried them thoroughly. They are sweet but never large, and I have concluded that I can get more fruit with the best of the spring varieties and have other fruits in the fall and do not need the little strawberries. In fact, all the spring and fall-bearing small fruits like the everbearing raspberries and strawberries are inferior to those that make a full spring crop. I have grown several varieties of the everbearing raspberries, and have not found one that will make in both spring and fall as good a crop as the standard spring-bearing varieties will make in the spring alone.

Growing House Ferns

"HOW may I grow ferns successfully? Why do some rose buds rot instead of opening?"

The mere name ferns is very indefinite as there are hundreds of kinds of ferns which need different treatments. Some ferns can be grown only in shaded greenhouses by skilled gardeners. Some are minute and delicate while others make trees. I once bid \$20 for a single plant of a Cibotium fern and someone else got it for more money. The ferns now so commonly grown in pots in dwellings are all variations or sports of

Nephrolepis-exaltata. These are the Boston fern which in leaves is exactly like the species except that the fronds fall over gracefully, while in the species they stand stiffly erect. Then the Boston fern has sported into numerous much divided fronds which have been given various names. As a rule, ferns prefer a soil largely composed of leaf mold from the forest mixed with sandy garden soil, all absolutely free from lime. They need good drainage and careful watering. The leaves or fronds should never be wet, but the water poured on the soil around them and enough to go clear through and then no more until dry. Shift from small pot carefully to a size larger and not all at once into a big pot. Do not set in the direct hot sunshine.

Cantaloupes for Market

"WHAT are the best varieties of cucumbers and cantaloupes to plant for market?"

There are thousands of acres of cucumbers and cantaloupes planted here. The growers have mainly planted the Klondyke, though I advised them that the Davis Perfect is better. Last season those who planted the Davis topped the market in price, and more will be planted this year. The cantaloupes generally planted are Netted Rock, Eden Gem, and Pollock salmon tinted. These are usually grown from seed brought from Rocky Ford, Colorado. A few have grown what is called the White Pink Meat. This is larger and later than the Netted Rock. It is crusted all over with white netting and has orange colored flesh, though called pink.

An All-the-year Garden

"PLEASE give details of your plan for an all-the-year garden."

In a general way, manure and fertilize heavily and cultivate absolutely clean. Then plant the earliest things in a close block so that when out, the ground will be ready in a body for later things. It would take too much space here to go into real details. Get my book, the "Garden Book for the South," from The Progressive Farmer office and you will have the whole matter in detail.

Kudzu Again

PIEDMONT North Carolina: "I want to know all about the plant called kudzu. They say it makes more hay than anything else."

Briefly, I will say that kudzu will make more forage than any other plant I am familiar with. Once in the ground, it is there to stay. If not pastured it will spread rapidly. It sends out runners flat on the land, and I have had them run over 30 feet and root at every joint. It is a good thing but you will have to watch it. Pasturing is the only way to keep it in bounds, for the mower will skip the runners. I have been experimenting with kudzu for 20 years and these are the opinions I have formed.

Earth Worms in Flower Pots

"PLEASE tell me how to destroy the worms in my flower pots. Also what kind of soil to use for a tuberous-rooted begonia?"

Slake some fresh lime and let it stand to settle. Then take the clear lime-water and pour enough on the pot to go clear through the soil. This will cause the worms to crawl to the top where you can pick them off. For begonias, mix one-half fine sifted black leaf mold from the woods with equal amount of grass sod rubbed through a quarter-inch sieve. Mix thoroughly. Use no manure, but a little fine bone meal may be mixed with the soil.

Propagating Marechal Niel Rose

SOME one at Houston, Texas, who is ashamed to sign a name, asks how to propagate the Marechal Niel. There is no rose more easy to root than this one. It is a hybrid rose cross between a Noisette and a Tea rose, with the bud and fragrance of the tea, and the habit of growth of the Noisette. Take a shoot that has just made a bud. Cut cuttings of three buds. Cut the upper

end half an inch above the joint and leave the entire leaf on. Cut the lower end square under the node and take off the leaves of this and the second node. Set the cuttings in a pan of sand kept in a half liquid state in a sunny window. In about four weeks little white roots will begin to show. Then pot the cuttings in strong clay loam soil in 2½ inch pots. Do this in August, and the little plants will have the pots full of roots in a few weeks and can be knocked out of the pots, and in your section, planted at once, and in a colder section packed in a frame for the winter and planted in the spring. Glad to know that Houston is growing flowers. I was there in December, 1859 when Col. House was a year old baby. The popular flowers there then were on the backs of the cards the gamblers used, for it seemed to me that gamblers were the leading business men and gambling the main calling in the shabby little town on the Snaky Bayou. I would like to see Houston now.

Growing Strawberry Plants

"WHAT method do the extensive growers of strawberry plants use? Do they sell plants from the runners and harvest a crop of fruit from the buds? Is there any estimate of the number of plants produced an acre?"

The large growers set blocks of plants in size according to the usual demand for the several varieties grown in the field. They are grown a year and are dug and sold in fall and spring. The entire block is dug and the runners bunched into bunches of 50. An entire new planting is made in the fall. Incidentally, they get some berries from unsold blocks, but the plants are the dependence. No estimate of number of plants on an acre can be made until the habit of the variety is known, for some varieties make few plants while others make a great many. Varieties in demand, which, like the Chesapeake, make few runners, must be grown in much larger areas than varieties which make many and may be in less demand.

Fertilizer for the Garden

"WHAT fertilizer do you advise with manure for the garden? I have a half-acre garden and one good load of manure."

One load of manure will not go far on a half-acre garden. I try to cover my garden thickly with manure in the fall so that it will lie and rot through the winter. My garden is less than half an acre, but I use five good loads and then in spring add acid phosphate at rate of 1,000 pounds an acre, and dig all in. I would spread that load of manure thickly as far as it will go and then add 100 pounds of acid phosphate to the manure. Then on the remainder use a good 3-8-3 fertilizer at rate of 1,000 to 1,500 pounds an acre. Your garden of red clay bakes in summer. If you can get plenty of black rotten leaves and earth from the woods and use it heavily every year, it will help mellow the soil. Then work in slaked lime at rate of a ton an acre once in five years, and this will not only sweeten the soil but will help to mellow it.

An Old Question

"IS IT safe for me to plant cucumbers, watermelons, cantaloupes, and cymplings near each other?"

All the plants named belong to the great natural order of Cucurbitaceae. But they are all in different genera. Plants cross within the species, but seldom do genera cross.

My cantaloupes and cucumbers are planted in adjoining rows. I do that every year because it is more convenient to have the plants with running vines in a block. I get first class melons and first class cucumbers and save seed that make plants which show no signs of crossing. I do not grow watermelons in my garden for lack of room, nor do I grow gourds and pumpkins. Cymplings and gourds will cross and all the different varieties of squashes blooming at same time will cross.

Seedless Oranges

"PLEASE settle a discussion. Do the seedless oranges naturally make no seed or are the young oranges slit with a knife to cut the 'seed strings'?"

There is no such thing in nature as a "seed string." Fruits have an ovary in which ovules form attached to a

placenta. This in like manner is attached to the pistil. The end of the pistil, the stigma, receives pollen which stretches down till it reaches the placenta and the ovules, and a new growth is set up in the ovules and a seed is formed. Now the fruit may be deficient in the bloom having no pistil; Hence there is no means for impregnating the ovules and no seed is formed.

About 50 years ago I dropped into the office of Mr. Saunders, then the horticulturist of the Department of Agriculture in Washington. He showed me in a greenhouse devoted to oranges some little plants in pots. He said that he had grafted these with cuttings from a seedless orange from Bahia, Brazil. He sent these to Riverside, California. Five or six years later I happened to be in Washington one winter day, and again dropped in to see Mr. Saunders. He said, "You are just in time to taste the first seedless navel oranges as I have just received a small basket from the trees I sent to California. I can only spare you half an orange." I found it very good. That was the orange known as the Riverside Navel. In any plant which men cultivate from other than seed nature gradually abandons seed making as they are not used. The cultivated banana has been, for untold years, grown from suckers, and has long since quit making seed. And yet one of my old students found acres of wild bananas in the Philippines that had plenty of seed. He sent me some and I grew banana plants from the seed. Many plants cultivated have failed to make seed.

Preparing Cotton Seed

"I HAVE been advised that it will give cotton a good send-off to roll the seed in nitrate of soda or a good fertilizer. Will it injure the germination of the seed?"

Rolling seed in powdered nitrate of soda, I fear, would seriously risk the life of the seed.

Spraying Grapes

"IN-THE Reference Special it is advised to spray grapes before blooming. I have bunch grapes of several varieties which have formed leaves. What spraying is needed?"

We spray grapes mainly to prevent the black rot. The first spraying should be made when the vines are dormant in February. We then spray with Bordeaux mixture, spraying trellis and all trash about the trellis. Then after the bloom is over, and the little grapes set, spray again and in ten days spray a third time. Here we are attacked by swarms of rose bugs every spring just as the flower beds set. These attack the blossom buds and eat every one of them unless checked. For these, we spray with an arsenate in water to which a liberal quantity of glucose or corn syrup is added. By careful spraying we manage to save part of the crop, but the bugs always get a share.

Plant Some Pop Corn for the Children

WHEN planting my spring crop, I always allow a plot for pop corn. It not only possesses much food value, but it is a delight to the children. If more of this corn is raised than can be used at home, it can be sold to local merchants or neighbors at a fair price.

I find raising pop corn a great stimulant and pleasure to my 14-year-old son. He has charge of this crop, and he makes a nice little sum of money each year from the surplus stock.

Pop corn should be planted early. It is necessary for it to have a long season in which to mature. F. G. B.

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