

THE FARM GARDEN.

W. H. TAYLOR.

VEGETABLE-CULTURE.

Asparagus.—The matured tops—the runner growths—should be cut down when sere. It is best to do it as soon as this condition is reached and before many of the berries fall. If left till the tops are perfectly dead, most of the berries will fall when the tops are handled, and, as the seed germinates freely, a host of young plants would come up as weeds, causing avoidable labour. If the stems are thick, as we may hope they will be, they are somewhat hard to cut with a knife. I use a slasher, which does the work in a fraction of the time it would take to do it with a knife. Cut as close to the surface as possible, for the sake of neatness. I am not aware that there is any other reason for it, though some claim that there are other reasons. If the beds are made in the old way—viz., rows close together on raised beds, with alleys between—the surface soil should be loosened and several inches thickness of it raked off in to the alleys. Then give a good coating of stable manure to the beds. The thickness of the layer that will be serviceable largely depends on the state of the manure. It is preferable, according to the consensus of opinion, to use it in a rather fresh state, as it decays down in a lighter condition than would heavy, fat manure, thus making for warmth in spring, and greater friability of soil. The soil thrown into the alleys is to remain there till spring. At that time the manure will have decreased very much in bulk. The soil is then thrown up on to it, to make a clean finish. The chief reason for leaving the resoiling till spring is that because, if put on earlier, it would grow weeds, while oats, &c., in the manure would break through; whereas if left till spring it will cover any green growth there may be, and remain clean for the young heads to come through. If the plants are on the flat, and the rows are further apart than in the old style, no earth can be taken off. Merely a good top-dressing of manure should be given, first having lightly pointed the surface over if at all firm. 6 in. or 8 in. deep of fairly fresh manure is a good dressing for raised beds, half that depth is sufficient for beds on the flat.

Seakale.—All the old leaves should be dead or nearly so; they may be cleared off. Precautions should be taken to guard the crowns against slugs. They have a liking for these, and if the slugs are shut in when the crowns are forced they damage the young shoots. Forcing may be