

bulbing. All species of herbs may be planted, also cabbages and cauliflowers. Celery for early crops may be sown under glass. Henderson's White Plume is the best variety for early use.

Asparagus.

The quality of asparagus depends on the strength of its growth; stout heads grown quickly are the most succulent. Nitrogen being the element that promotes vegetative growth, it follows that nitrogen in some form is the element of the greatest importance in asparagus-culture. If stable or other animal manure is applied in large quantities it answers quite well, but moderate quantities are not effective. The method of planting also has a bearing on the matter. If the plants are set in rows far apart, in conformity with modern practice, much less manure per plant is required than is the case with the old-fashioned beds, where the plants are in close competition with each other. In either case some added nitrogen would be beneficial; in the latter it should be regarded as indispensable, and more especially as the nitrogen-content of animal-manure is practically an unknown quantity to the user, and may amount to very little.

Nitrate of soda is the best form of nitrogen for asparagus, because it is immediately available—it has an immediate effect on growth. Phosphates and potash are also required, but in smaller amount. A good dressing of wood-ashes or the remains of rubbish-fires will supply all the potash needed. Failing this material sulphate of potash may be applied, using 1 oz. per square yard. Blood-and-bone will supply phosphate from the bone, and slowly available nitrogen from the blood. About 4 oz. per square yard should be used. All except nitrate of soda may be applied at once. Nitrate of soda, being highly soluble in water, is quickly washed down beyond the reach of the roots, and therefore should not be applied till the roots are active. The roots being active some time before top-growth is visible, about the middle of August is a good time to apply the nitrate. Comparatively large amounts can safely be used, up to 8 oz. per square yard for close-planted beds. This amount would kill slugs and most weeds, but would not injure the roots of asparagus.

SMALL-FRUITS.

Gooseberries.

Bushes should be trained up so as to secure a clean trunk between the surface of the soil and the first branch. The clean trunk should be at least 6 in. high, and a few inches more is better. To secure this all the buds on the cutting except three or four at the top should be cut out. If this has not been done it should be attended to before a young bush is planted. Bushes with branches coming from beneath the surface are a source of never-ending trouble. It is impossible to form a good bush, pruning is made difficult, and if weeds with perennial roots are present it is impossible to get them out. Besides these troubles, the work of cultivation around them is difficult and slow, causing waste of time and probably neglect.

Pruning: Young bushes should be started with three main branches evenly disposed around the trunk. These should, if they are strong, be reduced to about 10 in. If the shoots are feeble cut them down to near their base to induce strong growth. If three branches evenly disposed cannot be secured, and four can, keep the four and prune a few inches higher than advised for three branches. If only two strong branches can be secured cut these two down to about 6 in. In future years an endeavour should be made to duplicate the leading branches so as to work up an evenly formed bush. In dealing with an established bush it should be understood that although every young shoot and twig will bear fruit, as well as spurs on older wood, a good crop is not obtained by having a multiplicity of young twigs, but by securing a balance between root and top that will ensure proper development of the fruit. In other words, a multiplicity of shoots and twigs will result in a large number of berries. Judicious thinning of the wood will reduce the number, but the individual berries will be much finer, and the result a much more profitable crop. The object, then, is to prevent undue crowding. Thin the growths so that gathering can be easily done, and that will be about the proper balance. Strong young shoots that are left should be merely tipped. All other young twigs should be cut according to strength, the weakest being reduced to short spurs. All twigs on the lower part of the bush should be reduced to spurs, and all strong shoots on the inner part of a bush should be broken or cut right out so that they cannot break again.