

## STRAWBERRY-GROWING.

Generally, growers are well forward with the preparation of sites for the new beds. Those who have so far not made the necessary arrangements for the supply of a reliable strain of Marguerite, Duke of Edinburgh, or Melba, are recommended to make early application, as it is anticipated that there will be a heavy demand next season. The variety Captain Cook was grown last season in fair quantities, and the fruit, though not surpassing the Marguerite in quality, carried in chips equally well, and generally opened up in a showy condition. In many localities the plant does as well as the Marguerite, but complaints have been received from some growers that it lacks constitution as compared with the latter variety.

—*J. W. Collard, Orchard Instructor, Auckland.*

**POULTRY-KEEPING.**

## SELECTION OF BREEDING-STOCK.

THE coming month should see all the breeding-pens mated up. There is yet ample time to commence hatching operations, but it is always a wise course to have the birds mated well ahead, in order that they may be well settled down before the eggs are required for reproductive purposes. A common mistake made, especially by side-line poultry-keepers, is to use eggs for hatching purposes indiscriminately from a flock of fowls. If a good laying-strain is to be built up or maintained it is of the first importance that only the best birds in the flock shall be bred from. These should be placed in a breeding-pen by themselves. The great underlying principle in all breeding is that like produces like. Thus, if the best returns are to be secured and cull stock reduced to a minimum, nothing but ideal specimens should be bred from.

On all well-managed plants (as advised in previous notes) the proposed breeders for the coming season should have been chosen and carefully marked before the commencement of the moulting-period, for it is then and only then that the best specimens can be selected with any degree of certainty. For a bird to give a heavy egg-yield and be a long-season layer she must necessarily be a late moulter, and it is difficult or almost impossible to detect such birds if left till the whole flock has moulted. Where individual records have been kept by means of trap-nests or single pens the birds can be mated according to their productive capacity, as the individual record is the only means of knowing accurately the laying-power of a bird. This system of finding the best layer, however, is seldom adopted by other than specialist breeders. Thus if nothing is known of the laying-power of a bird she must necessarily be selected by her general appearance, and there is no better guide to this than by choosing the late moulter—providing, of course, that the bird possesses desirable breeding characters in other respects.

The eye for form is to some extent a natural gift, but with careful study and observation the average poultry-keeper will find little difficulty in selecting the most suitable birds. In the first place, it is important to have fixed types of purebred birds, or at