

Protection.—Another important factor in safe wintering is that of protection. This may be provided by housing the bees in good watertight hives, and protecting them by good shelter-hedges or fences. Great winter losses occur every year in this country through lack of attention to the hives, more particularly to the roofs. Leaky roofs are an abomination, and should not be tolerated under any circumstances. By allowing the roofs to leak the mats and hives become damp, and the consequent drain on the stores is largely in order to keep up the heat of the cluster for safe wintering. It is safe to state that where the bees are kept dry the amount of food consumed to keep up the heat of the cluster will be small as compared with the stores eaten where proper protection has not been afforded by the beekeeper. New Zealand in general being a wind-swept country, it behoves the beekeeper to see that the bees are located in a sheltered position. Cold winds militate against brood-rearing, and also prevent the bees from taking a cleansing flight during the spring months.

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HORTICULTURE.

The Tobacco Crop.

LAST month's notes dealing with handling of the late crop have now a special application while the last of the crop is being harvested. The process of curing is a very delicate operation, and great care and attention is required to turn out good leaf at this season of the year. The leaf is very sensitive to changes of temperature and humidity, and adverse conditions quickly spoil its texture, colour, and aroma. Only by the closest attention to detail now may these qualities be obtained and preserved at their best. To leave well-cured leaf exposed to adverse conditions for even a short time results in serious damage. Its bright colour is lost, and a spongy condition of the leaf is acquired. Also the conditions in the bulking-room must be up to requirements, or the finest cured leaf will be spoiled. A wooden floor that is damp through being near the ground and unventilated has often caused serious loss through moulds developing. The same thing happens when any decayed organic matter is present; the pleasant aroma and flavour is lost and a musty flavour is acquired. As before stated, the room in which the bulks are made must be sweet, clean, dry, and free from sudden changes of temperature. The leaf will then not only retain its desirable qualities, but greatly improve with two or three years of such storage.

Planting of Small Fruits.

Preparation of the land for planting these fruits should be completed as soon as possible, so that the ground may be settled down before planting commences. A good dressing of organic manure should be turned well under, with a dressing of bonedust and basic slag to follow. Black currants prefer a cool moist position, and are best planted 3 ft. to 4 ft. apart in the rows with 6 ft. to 8 ft. between the rows. Raspberries require similar conditions; 1 ft. between the plants and 5 ft. to 6 ft. between the rows is good spacing. Gooseberries and red currants require a more open position, and are best planted 5 ft. to 6 ft. apart both ways. Where plants have to be purchased they should be carefully selected now, and arrangements made for delivery as soon as they are ready for removal—about the month of May.

In the warm climate of Auckland it is said to be inadvisable to plant out strawberries before the month of May, but in most districts it is best to plant them as soon as possible now, so that they may become established