

This crop will not compete seriously with the bushes for soil moisture, as it will not have made much growth until the autumn rains come; nor will it compete seriously with the bushes for light. It will establish and will check the development of weeds and supply green material for ploughing into the ground about July. A broadcast dressing of 2 cwt. of superphosphate at the time of sowing the cover crop is a great advantage both to the cover crop and to the plantation of bush fruits.

Strawberries

AREAS for autumn-planting of strawberries should be prepared. For successful strawberry-growing it is essential that the soil should be free of perennial and twitchy weeds, and should not dry out in the summer months. In soils which dry out there is the frequent possibility that the grass grub will destroy many of the plants, and on light soils of this class it appears practically impossible to prevent this.

The preparation of the land after cleaning consists of ploughing under a liberal dressing of blood and bone, superphosphate and sulphate of potash, and harrowing down until the surface is moderately fine. Occasional light cultivation will destroy seedling weeds. The planting should be done as soon as the plants are ready, and even in the warmer districts should be completed by the end of April.

Preparing New Areas for Bush Fruits

WHERE plants of small fruits are to be purchased for planting

this season it is not too soon to order them now. The preparation of land for planting new areas, if not already done, should be undertaken as soon as its present crop has been harvested.

When cleared, a green cover crop should be sown. A quick-growing cover crop will be sufficiently advanced to plough in and give good results by May or June, when the planting of permanent bush fruits can be undertaken.

The following table of planting distances will be of assistance in determining the numbers of plants required:—

Type of Plant.	Distance between rows (feet).	Distance apart in row (feet).	No. Required Per Acre.
Currant (black)	6 to 8	3	1815 to 2420
Currant (red)	6 to 8	4	1380 to 1815
Gooseberry	6 to 8	5	1089 to 1452
Raspberry	6	1 to 1-1/3rd	5448 to 7260
Raspberry (vigorous varieties such as Lloyd George)	6	3	2420
Loganberry	6	6	1210
Boysenberry	6	8 to 10	726 to 907
Strawberry (warm districts, 1-yr. crop)	24 to 27 inches	9 to 12 inches	21,780 to 25,813
Strawberry (cool districts, 3-yr. crop)	30 to 36 inches	14 to 16 inches	12,500 to 13,068

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retain practically their full complement of leaves.

2. If the season has been dry, with indications of dry conditions continuing until well after topping has been completed, heavy topping should be done—that is to say, the crop of a variety carrying 18 leaves to the plant should be reduced to 10 leaves, and to a similar proportion in other varieties.

A crop grown during a dry season is invariably poor; the plants are stunted, and the leaves small, thin, and papery. This type of crop ripens prematurely, often so rapidly that it cannot be coped with, and the result is that a large quantity of the leaf becomes ripe on the plant. Such leaf eventually becomes a total loss to the grower. Leaf harvested under seasonal conditions of this kind lacks body to such an extent that it breaks down under the curing process, and is then of very little value.

Heavy and Light Topping

By heavy topping the plant previously drawn upon by the seed head

and top leaves is diverted to the 10 leaves remaining on the plant, which quickly fill out and grow to normal size, texture, and quality. When harvested, these leaves present no abnormal difficulties in the process of curing.

In a wet season the crop nearly always grows rank and coarse and fails to ripen at the proper time, often continuing to grow throughout the harvesting period without ripening at all, and, when harvested, only a very small percentage of bright leaf is obtained from each curing batch.

By topping lightly and leaving the full number of leaves on each plant the reverse effect to that of heavy topping is obtained, and the effects of the wet season are largely counteracted.

The young, newly-formed leaves remaining at the top of the plant draw so heavily on the food supply that the flow to the lower fully-grown leaves is, to all intents and purposes, cut off, thus reducing the tendency to rank

growth and allowing the leaves to ripen in the usual way.

Suckering

About 10 days after topping, suckers or laterals appear in the axils of the leaves, due to an attempt by the plants to reproduce themselves. These suckers should be removed at least once a week. In normal circumstances these growths should not be allowed to remain on the plant for any time after they have obtained two inches in length, as from this size onward they begin to draw so heavily on the plant's food supply that in a very short time the main leaves are starved and become thin and papery, with immature ripening setting in.

When suckers make an appearance early in the plant's growth, particularly around the base of the plant, it is an infallible sign that the plants have been raised from inferior seed.

—U. A. YELDHAM, Tobacco Instructor, Motueka.