

GARDENING NOTES

(By MR. J. JOYCE, Landscape Gardener, Christchurch.)

THE APPLE TREE.

If the pip of an apple is sown in well prepared ground, it will take about two years before it is fit to be grafted on. But growing stocks from seed is now discarded, mostly on account of the blight which attacks them. The recognised stocks now principally used are the Northern Spy and Winter Majetin. Both varieties are blight-proof. The Northern Spy is a very fine rosy apple, with a fine crisp flavor, and is a good dessert fruit. The Majetin is a culinary apple, and a late keeper, and of a dull green color, a little red on the sunny side. The Spy is a shy bearer, but the Majetin is pretty regular. The Spy makes a lot of fine fibrous roots, hence it is a good stock. The Majetin is less fibrous, but makes a good strong growing stock. As these stocks are not attacked by the Woolly Aphis blight, they are very suitable for grafting the apple on. But though the stocks are free from blight they do not guarantee the apple tree which has been grafted on them to be immune from all the blights to which apple trees are subject. The advantage gained is a good healthy root. The tree which has been grafted does not partake of the blight-proof nature of its foster parent. When the graft is one year old, the care of the future tree commences. It is then headed back to the height that the stem is intended to be. Then the following season it throws out two or three shoots, and all the rest are to be rubbed off so as to have a clean stem. The next year those new shoots must be headed back again to about half their season's growth; and so on each season, pruned in the same manner. In about three or four years, if it does well, it will have formed sufficient branches to make the foundation of a good tree. The growth of the tree must be open in the centre, and a sufficient distance allowed between each branch, so that there will be plenty light and air to play on them. It is a mistake to leave too many branches on the tree, and all the inner or lateral shoots should be nipped back to about four or five leaves, towards the end of the summer, to be pruned in the winter back to two or three eyes, whilst the leading shoots should be headed back more or less according to the growth of the tree. The leading shoots should not be interfered with during their summer growth, unless some may be growing out of proportion to the rest, then they may be cut back in a line with the others. Winter pruning may be performed any time from the fall of the leaf in autumn until the budding forth in spring. In summer pruning care must be taken not to cut too close, for if pruned too close to the stem or branch the buds very often shoot out again, and those which would bear become wood, and the object intended is lost. By leaving five or six buds on the shoot there is room for making wood if the buds should happen to shoot out again. The inner ones will form bearing, and in the winter they can be pruned back to two or three dormant buds.

Procuring Trees from the Nursery.

Trees should be purchased from a reliable nurseryman, and selected as early in the season as possible. If left too late the best of the trees may be gone. If not ready to plant, do not wait on that account: procure the trees and heel them in, in a nice sheltered spot in the garden. They will be all the better if left to remain there for a month or more. When taken up they will have made nice fibrous roots, which is a sign they are going to grow. By treating them in this manner they can be planted at leisure as occasion requires, but never leave the roots exposed to sun or drying winds. A tree out of the ground is like a fish out of water. The delicate fibrous roots are provided with little mouths at their extremities, and if these are destroyed by being out of the ground too long, the tree gets a bad check and cannot make any headway until fresh rootlets are formed to suck up the necessary nourishment in the form of liquid. A tree

should be always provided with a good supply of roots according to the size of the branches which they have to maintain. A medium tree with a good body of healthy roots is preferable to a large tree with an inferior body of roots. Very often the fine-looking tree when taken up out of the nursery lacks the body of roots which is necessary to maintain such a size. The remedy is that it must be pruned back to balance the roots, else the tree will make very little headway; as it is impossible for a weak body to carry too heavy a load. It is also a mistake to allow young trees to bear a full crop of fruit the first few years. If they are allowed to bear before they come to a mature age, which is generally reckoned to be about seven years, they will not make good trees. The sap, which should go to make good strong branches to form the tree, will go to maintain the fruit, hence a poor stunted growth.

Cultivation.

In order to keep trees in a good healthy condition, attention must be paid to cultivation by keeping the soil nicely worked around the trees during the summer and digging in the winter, adding a little manure to weak-growing subjects. When trees come to a bearing state, and some are found to be making a lot of superfluous wood and very little fruit, which sometimes is the case, especially when the soil is very rich, the remedy for such a tree is root-pruning. By checking the growth less wood will be formed, and the tree will form bearing buds, where wood would have been if it had not undergone the operation of root-pruning. Pruning back the shoots of a vigorous tree year after year only aggravates the evil, if the root action is not checked. In fact the more a healthy tree is pruned the more wood it will make, provided it does not bear a reasonable crop each year, for when the growth of branches are cut away, naturally the great body of roots sends up a considerable amount of sap, and to find an outlet for such a quantity nature steps in to supply the want by a luxuriant growth of branches. The remedy then is to balance the tree by a judicious pruning of both roots and branches. Root-pruning is not practised nearly as much as it ought to be, when trees are making too much wood. Root-pruning in this case is more necessary than branch-pruning, for when the growth is checked there will not be so much wood to cut away.

Root-pruning.

Root-pruning is performed by taking a clean sharp spade and digging out a trench, say about three feet from the trunk of the tree, cutting clean all the roots on one side and, if possible getting under the tree, cutting away any strong tap roots which might be there. This is done in the winter time. If that does not remedy the evil, and the growth is not checked the following summer, repeat the same operation the next pruning season, on the other side of the tree, which was not touched the preceding year. If this is done the object sought will be attained.

Renovating an Old Tree.

If an old favorite, from some cause looks unhealthy and is making poor headway, owing to the roots having got into an uncongenial soil, or from overbearing in past years, the remedy is to give it a good pruning back of the branches and thinning out, if too many. Then dig a good wide trench all round the tree, cutting away all big roots, throwing out all the soil, and replacing with a good mixture of rotten manure and loam, or, better still, rotten turf. Then in the summer place a good mulch of stable manure around the tree and leave it to its fate.

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