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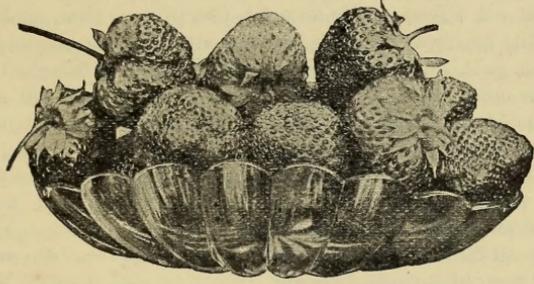
Subscribed

E. J. Ingram

THE



Brandywine Strawberry.



"A Dish of Royal Brandywines."

[From Biggle Berry Book, published by "Farm Journal," price 50 cents.]

How and Why I Grow It.

How. The first thing in preparing to grow strawberries is to select a suitable place; while most writers on the subject say that the strawberry will grow on any good ground that will produce a crop of corn or wheat. What I can learn from the successful growers of fine berries agrees with my own experience, that a deep, rich loam, where corn or grass will grow the rankest, is the place to grow *plants*; but for fine fruit, and plenty of it, the three great requisites are a strong plant, plenty of fertility, and *water*. My own experience has been with a very good sandy loam on a gentle slope to south and east. This has had a good clay subsoil underlaid with sand. At the top of the slope, the clay is all gone; at the bottom of the slope, which reaches to the overflow of the Brandywine creek, the soil is quite deep. This is the place where corn and grass do their best, and the plants grow fastest and thickest. In the middle of the slope, where the surface bakes after every rain and wheat makes the most bushels, the berries do the same. The plants here will not be as thick on the ground, but will be larger and stronger; while at the top of the slope, even with the great rainfall of twelve inches in a week just after the berries had begun to ripen, ten days later, out of ten of the leading varieties grown then, the Brandywine was the only one worth picking, and it was very poor compared to the ones grown below. While the land should be well drained, it should not be steep enough to wash badly.

The Grub. One of the greatest enemies to the strawberry plant is the white grub, the larvæ of the May beetle. In localities where the skunks and snakes are practically exterminated, these become very numerous. The beetle deposits its eggs in June and early July where the ground is covered with something to hide the parent and prom-

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ise food for the young grub, and, as it remains in the grub form two years, the plants should not be set in land that has been in favorable condition for depositing eggs for at least two seasons.

The most trouble I have had with the grub was on an old patch plowed down just after fruiting, sowed to buckwheat, and reset to berries the next spring.

Where the conditions are very favorable to the growth of plants, strong growers like the Brandywine may get along, if the grubs are not too numerous; but if not favorable a grub easily eats off the roots faster than the plant can send out new ones.

In Preparing, the ground should be well spaded or plowed and thoroughly fined. If the season be dry, make the ground firm. For the large grower, who prepares especially on good soil, fine ground bone and potash in some form, applied on all the surface and thoroughly harrowed in, is the proper fertilizer before planting; but if you do not have the bone, good, fine yard manure, well plowed in, with a good dressing of wood ashes harrowed or raked into the surface, will do as well and will make more plant growth. A bushel of unleached wood ashes to the square rod would not be too much, if applied all over the surface. Do not fertilize heavily in rows, especially with potash in any form, as it will injure the rootlets and kill the plant. It is not safe to apply potash on top of the plants except they be covered with snow. It will destroy the crown, and as potash and phosphoric acid do not leach out of soil good enough for strawberries, it is best to apply all the former before planting. Potash is very essential to the growth of fruit buds and firm, high-flavored berries.

When the surface is thoroughly fined I smooth it over with a smoothing-board, which I like better than a roller, for this purpose—it crushes all clods. On the even surface, it is easier to get the plants the proper depth, to get the rows straight, and the surface does not dry out so fast.

In field planting I usually make a light mark with a chain; but for a small patch I plant to the side of a line. Never break the surface with a furrow, or a hole until you are ready to put in the plant and return the fresh earth to the roots.

Preparing Plants. The roots of the plant should never get thoroughly dry. I dig the plants with the *point* of a light pick driven well down under the plant, jerk it up; when, if the ground is not too wet and heavy, the plant can be seized well down to the roots and the dirt shaken out. I throw these into a basket or barrow, cover with a cloth and take to a damp cellar to trim, taking off all the runners, dead leaves, and green ones except two or three of the shortest stemmed ones. These last are least apt to wither after planting. The plants are set upright in a pan or bucket with water enough to cover the roots; they are carried in these to the patch and dropped by a boy as needed by the planter, never more than two plants being out of the water and the ground at one time.

Planting. For this I use a mason's trowel with about one-third of the point broken off, the corners ground off, and end sharpened. I prefer one of which the point of the handle stands up well when the trowel is laid flat. This shape is better to get the proper slope to the hole; with the ground in good condition, one stroke, the blade driven in full length at about forty-five degrees and the dirt drawn back, the plant set with the other hand against the smooth back of the hole with roots spread out, and the *same depth that it grew*; the fresh dirt pushed back on the roots, no dry dirt or clods allowed to roll in, then with the foot or knee, with a forward push, press the dirt to the roots with the whole weight of the body, unless the ground be quite damp, when less pressure will be better. If the roots of the plant are too long for the hole, cut them off; do not set them in doubled up.

I have been more successful setting plants with the roots well sloped than straight down, probably because the dirt is pressed to them better. The roots of a plant growing alone will be spread out near the surface.

Cultivation should begin at once and repeated often enough to keep the surface mellow. Do not hill to the plants or let the surface bake after a rain; shallow and often is the best rule.

I prefer to set plants as soon as the ground is fit to work in the spring; they are less injured by removal and start better then than later. I do not remove any of the runners, but keep the first ones in the row pointing to a missed place or a weak plant. As they fill up the row thick enough, they are allowed to spread out until the end of the season. I have never thinned plants much. I have never had any that I thought would have been benefited by it, except some Warfield. Possibly this is because I do not use much stimulating manure before setting the plants. Varieties that make several crowns to the plant should have more room than the single crown varieties, and they make less runners if not stimulated too much. Most varieties will regulate their space well enough, provided they have feed and water enough at fruiting time. If you have no facilities for watering, this is best secured by

Mulching. When the ground first freezes, the plants should be covered lightly with short manure, manure that has been heated enough to start all seeds in it and forked over until clear of lumps or long straw; the finer the better. Later the spaces *between* the rows should be covered with any coarse material that will serve as a mulch to retain the moisture. This may be done after digging what plants you may wish in the spring. If the object is early berries, this is enough until picking time, unless weeds should come up, which should be hand pulled. If the object is fine berries and plenty of them, add to the fine manure on the plants until it is as much as three inches thick and leave it there in the spring. If the manure is fine, with no long straw in it, all the strong plants will come through. For this purpose horse or sheep manure is good. The finest berries I ever had were from a heavy covering of hog manure. In field culture I prefer the rows three feet apart, letting the row cover about half the space for bearing. The Brandywine has produced the finest and most berries in thick, matted rows.

Why? I have been testing all the standard varieties since I began growing berries for market, retaining those that proved most profitable. I found the Brandywine the spring of 1889, and have been increasing the planting every season, until now with four acres I have no other fully tested variety growing, though I still have a dozen of the newer ones on trial.

The Brandywine combines more of the good points of a successful variety than any I have tried.

Vitality. The plants are strong, single crown, with plenty of fine roots, not a few large ones. It bears shipping and transplanting very well. Plants sent to California, Spokane, Washington, and to Canada, by both mail and express, being eight days in the package in either case, were in good condition and stood the hot, dry summer better than any other variety grown there.

Vigor. The plants are strong growers, very large for single crown, make plenty of runners, short between the plants. Mr. Crawford, the introducer, says in the "Rural New Yorker" that "one dozen Brandywine set in the spring, eight feet apart in a row one hundred feet long, with good care would fill the row to three feet wide by fall. This might take some fussing, but that is good for most of us."

Hardiness. The plant stands the hot sun and the winter cold very well. I have not seen any plant, even the little ones on the end of the runners, without any cover, injured by severe winter.

Bloom. The flower is perfect, needing no other with it to make it fruit; is of large size and continues a long time in bloom. One season the Sharpless and Jessie blossoms were killed by a single frost; were not worth picking. The Brandywine lost a few early blooms, but bore a fine crop; the next two seasons the Gandy (late) blossoms were injured by cold rains; scarcely any perfect fruit ripened, while the Brandywine ripened a good crop each season, some of the last being imperfect. It is a long time in bearing. We picked ripe berries from the same patch last season from May 20th to June 30th.

Fruit. The *Rural New Yorker* says:—"The berries average larger than any variety we have grown." Color, bright, glossy red, which extends to the center; is quite firm, bears handling and shipping as well as any variety I have grown; is never ill-shapen, all but the very largest being of regular conical form. The fruit stalks are stiff and hold the berry up from the ground. The pickers prefer to pick them to any other. The berries are easily prepared for use. A lady who always gets them for canning, preferring them to all others, says her husband stemmed twenty quarts in an hour and scarcely stained his fingers. It rots as little as any I have grown; the foliage is abundant and always healthy, shading the berries well, preventing sun scald in hot, showery weather. The flavor is of the wild berry, only sweeter; never any muskiness. Even the sound part of a part-rotten berry is as good as ever; is better when fully ripe; will keep a long time on the plants. We always pick all ripe berries and a-sort them for market, selling the little, unmarketable ones at home. While it is sometimes difficult to dispose of these of most varieties after the weather gets warm, the Brandywine never gets messy and have never sold any for less than one dollar a thirty-two-quart crate.

F. P. Darlington, of Darlington Bros., grocers, West Chester, Pa., who have sold the Brandywine all the time it has been grown, says in his thirty years experience growing and selling berries, the Brandywine has given more satisfaction to seller and purchaser than any he has handled. Again, that he was able to return 50 per cent. more for them, picked the day before sold and hauled four miles, than for Bubach grown one-half mile from his store, picked and sold the same day; and that it has displaced all other varieties, even the Sharpless, for his trade.

The Bubach is the only large berry that competes with the Brandywine in productiveness. Owing to its poor quality and being too soft to bear assorting in warm weather, it was not profitable to me. In the Biggle "Berry Book," in answer to the question, Ought everybody have all the strawberries they want? Eugene Willett says, "All they can possibly eat means health to many a poor mortal with weak digestion. In all the world there is not a better tonic, to say nothing of the comfort of strawberries three times a day on the table and filling up twice or three times between meals from your own little patch." Any one who has never had them in abundance cannot have any idea of how many a family can use, or how much enjoyment they can give, to say nothing of the ease of preparing them for the table. In our family we use more each year, about two quarts a day for each person, besides eating in the patch. I use no milk or cream in berry time and very little meat, and am never disturbed with the heat while strawberries last.

I will sell plants of the Brandywine in the spring, for the first time, at **five dollars per hundred and one dollar per dozen**; one-half hundred at hundred rates. I will send good, strong plants properly packed by mail, prepaid, at above rates, on receipt of price. Give name and post office plainly. Order early.

I would plant six feet apart, in rows four feet apart, if more than one row is wanted. You can pick them in wider rows than we can get pickers to do it, and you can get more from each plant set that way. When the weather gets warm, if a plant begins to look wilted, examine about the root for the grub and remove it without disturbing the roots if you can. If you follow directions your rows should be set full three feet wide by fall.

While you could get a start in the variety with one dozen, fifty plants would give you a supply of fruit the next season for a good-sized family.

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