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A. Ford

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LATE SPRING MANAGEMENT OF THE NEW STRAWBERRY BED

by

A. E. Ford

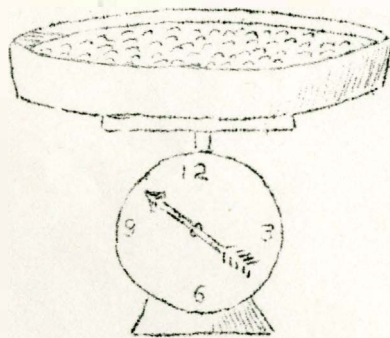
Specialist in Entomology and Horticulture

CULTIVATION

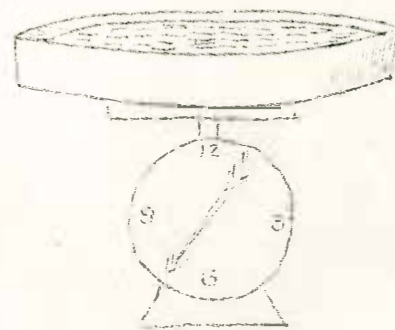
One of the most essential things in successful strawberry growing is a proper amount of the right kind of cultivation. No boy or girl club member can ever expect to break club yield records without cultivating (hoeing) his patch. Why is it that cultivation is so necessary in strawberry growing? There are four principal reasons, and they are taken up separately below.

Conservation of Moisture.

We have already learned that strawberries must have plenty of moisture in order to do well. During certain seasons in many parts of South Dakota there is a decided lack of moisture. Because of this, it is up to us as strawberry growers to save all of this moisture possible and this can be done by cultivation. It has been a long established fact that moisture will evaporate much more rapidly from ground with a packed or crusted surface than from one with a top surface of loosely cultivated soil. If you do not believe this, conduct this experiment. Take two pans, dishes or other containers of equal surface. Fill each with an equal amount of soil and moisture thoroughly with equal amounts of soil. Weigh these and see that their weight is equal. Set these out of doors and keep the surface of one loosely cultivated and leave the other uncultivated. Weigh these from time to time and you will find that the uncultivated dish will lose weight more rapidly, showing that water evaporates more rapidly from uncultivated ground. This experiment would be an excellent one for each club to conduct.



CULTIVATED



UNCULTIVATED

### Improvement of Soil Texture.

Someone has said "tillage is manure" and this comes very near being so. Cultivation makes the plant food in the soil more readily available, and hence is a direct benefit to the growth and yielding qualities of the plant.

### Increases Power to Absorb Moisture.

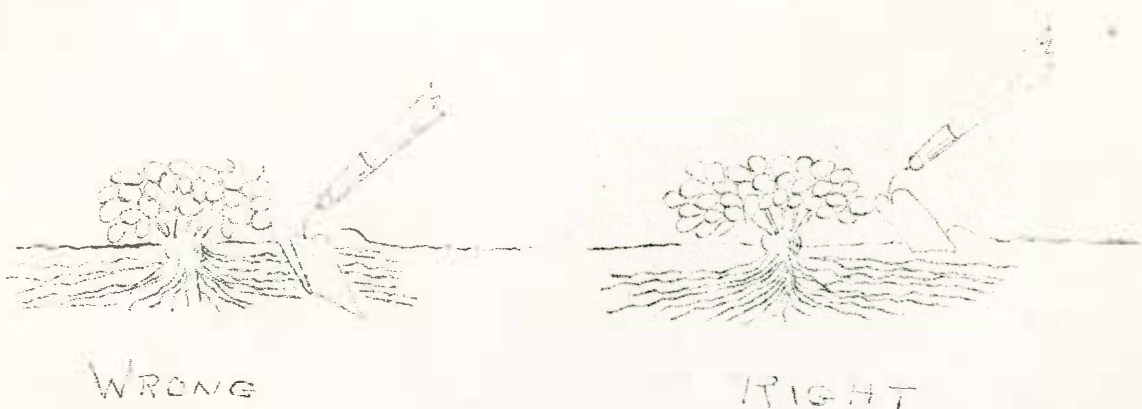
It is a well known fact that a smaller amount of water runs off loosely cultivated ground following a heavy rain, than from hard and crusted ground. For this reason, it is essential that the strawberry patch have a loosely cultivated surface at all times.

### Weed Destruction.

Weeds are the worst enemy of the young strawberry. They must be kept down or the berries will fail. Frequent thorough cultivations is the best way to keep the weeds under control. Never let weeds get high enough to shade the plants because it is not only hard on the plants, but deeper cultivation will be then necessary, which will injure the strawberry roots.

How often should the strawberry bed be cultivated? The bed should be given a thorough but shallow hoeing just as soon as possible after each rain. When it does not rain, cultivation should be repeated about every ten days.

Never cultivate strawberries deeply. We have already learned that the strawberry is a surface feeder, which means that the roots are near the surface. Deep cultivation is apt to cause considerable injury to the plants through the cutting of the roots. Weeds can be



destroyed if not allowed to get too high and a surface mulch can be maintained without hoeing deeper than two inches. This will cause no injury to strawberry roots.

Few tools are needed for the club members strawberry bed. For cultivation purposes the ordinary hoe is about all that is needed for small beds. Always keep your hoe sharp as it then can be used for cutting runners. If it is desirable to use tools other than the hoes such as wheel-hoes, etc., these tools should be selected with the following points in mind: They should be easy working tools that can be used very close to plants without injury, leave the soil level and finely mulched, and by all means they should be shallow cultivators.

### SNIPPING THE BLOSSOMS

In no case should the first blossoms on young plants be allowed to set fruit. All blossoms should be pinched off as soon as they appear. The blossoms should be kept pinched off the overbearing berries. In no case should the early bearing varieties be allowed to fruit the first year.

Why is it that the first blossoms should not be allowed to set fruit? It is simply because young growing plants need all their strength and nourishment for growth and not for fruit. If allowed to fruit young, the plant's growth is stunted and for the rest of its life its yielding power will be very limited. The plant that is allowed to become well grown out before setting fruit is capable of bearing a maximum load of fruit for two or more years.

### IRRIGATION

Under irrigation strawberries will do wonders. Unfortunately, but a few of our South Dakota boys and girls are so situated that they can irrigate. In case of dry season, nothing better could be done than to get water to the plants even by hose. Everbearing berries which have an adequate supply of water in the fall will continue to bear quite heavily until the ground is covered with snow.

In many parts of South Dakota only artesian water is available. When this is true, irrigation of strawberry beds must be handled very carefully. Frequent irrigations with artesian water often shows damaging effects. On the other hand, a few heavy irrigations with artesian water seldom does harm.

### CARE OF THE RUNNERS

If you will turn back to your April lesson, you will see where we discussed different systems of planting, such as the hill and matted row systems. Remember that in the hill system all runners must be removed. By this time many of your plants probably will be throwing out runners. Now is the time to keep them cut off. Cut them as closely to the plants as possible without injuring the same. In cutting these runners, a sharp knife or pair of shears can be used, but a sharp hoe or spade is better because the job can be done without any bending of the back. In chopping off the runners with hoe or spade, great care should be taken not to chop through the runner and deep into the soil because many of the roots will then be severed. Always remove the runners with a light stroke of the hoe so the cutting edge will not go far beneath the surface of the soil.