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PLANTING THE STRAWBERRY BED

by

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You have probably ordered your plants by this time and would, undoubtedly, want to know how much ground to prepare for them. In speaking of strawberry beds we will use the square rod as the unit area. The number of plants necessary for a square rod of ground depends entirely upon the planting system you choose to use. There are three common systems of planting and training strawberry beds, namely, (1) the hill system, (2) the hedge row system, (3) and the matted row system. These are taken up separately below.

The Hill System

In the hill system only the original plants are allowed to grow by keeping all runners cut off. It is the ideal system for home garden use because the fruit usually grows to a larger size than in the other systems. It consists in setting the plants from one to two feet apart in the rows and the rows from one to three feet apart. Of course, the number of plants necessary per square rod depends upon the distance apart the plants are to be set. In order that you may readily tell how many plants are necessary per square rod according to the different spacings, we have included the following table:

<u>Plants apart in the row</u>	<u>Rows apart</u>	<u>No. plants per square rod</u>
1 ft.	1 ft.	275
1½ ft.	1½ ft.	121
1½ ft.	2 ft.	100
1½ ft.	3 ft.	36

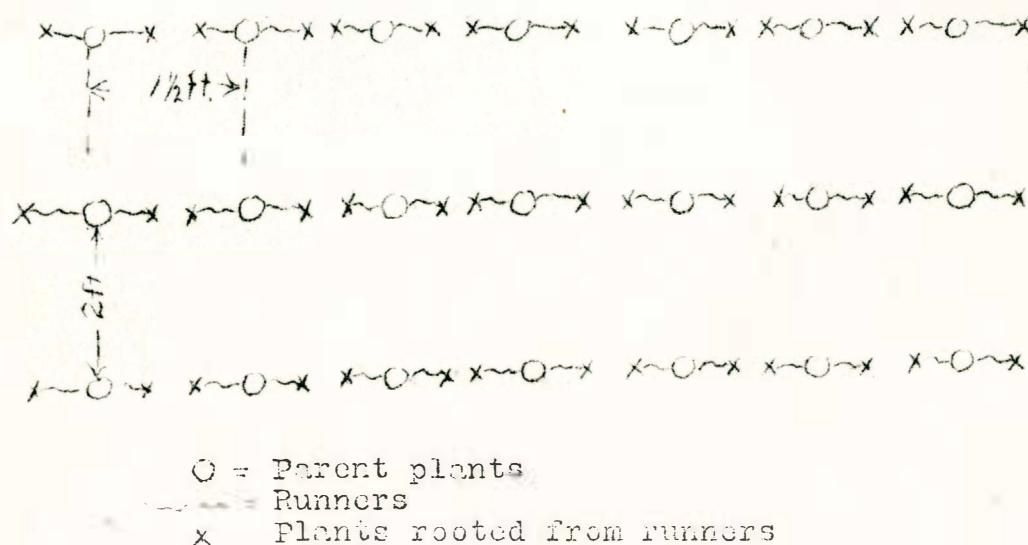
Of these different spacings we believe that the two middle ones are the best. Plants set a foot apart both ways are a little crowded and where the rows are three feet apart more ground is used than is really necessary.

In using the hill system always remember that no runners should be allowed to take root except where it is desirable to secure new plants for sale. In this case one or two rows may be allowed to set new plants.

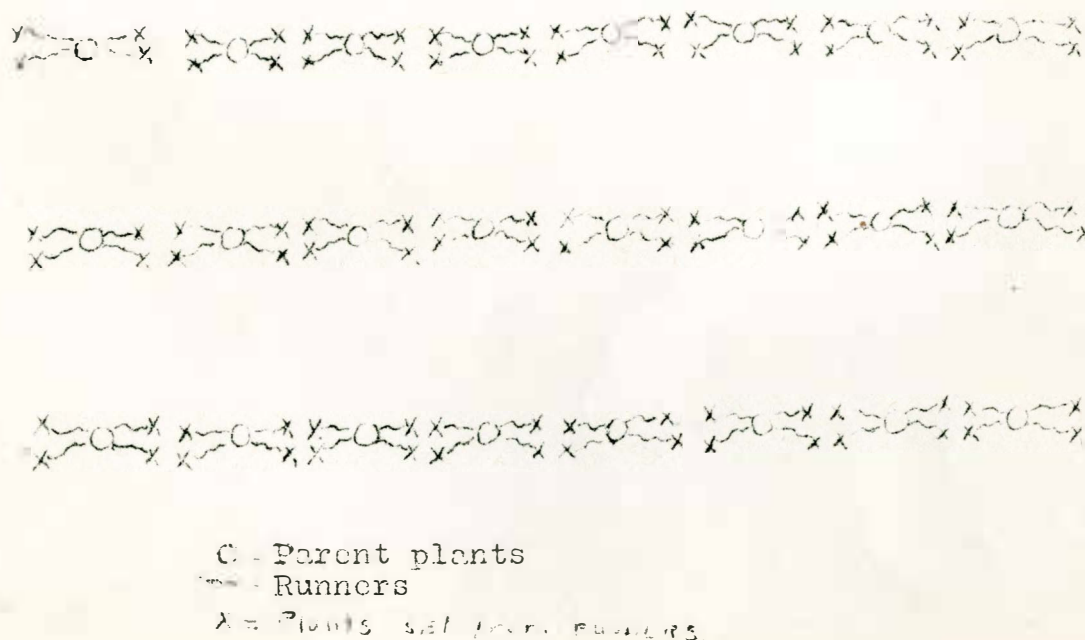
The Hedge Row System.

There are two hedge row systems, the single and the double. In the single-hedge system each plant is allowed only two runners, which are made to take root in the row, one in front of and one behind the parent plant. In the double-hedge system two runners are allowed to root in front of and two behind the parent plant. The rows should be from two to two and one-half feet apart. This system makes lots of work, but is capable of producing wonderful fruit. The single and double hedge system is shown below:

Single Hedge Row System

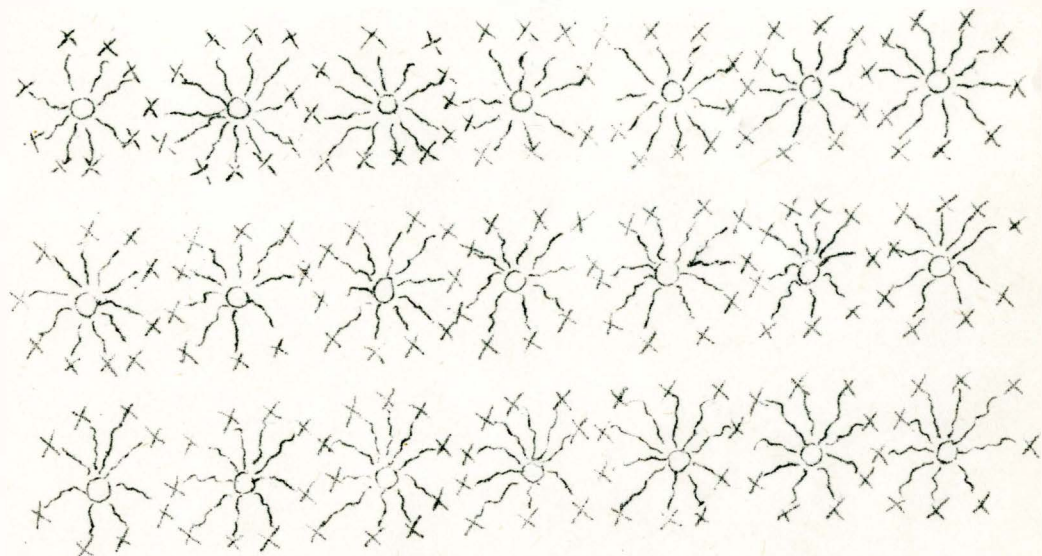


Double Hedge Row System



The Matted Row System.

The matted row system is the one used by most of our large scale strawberry growers because it is the easiest to maintain and can be cultivated by horse power when the rows are set far enough apart. For garden purposes where hand cultivation is used, the rows should be about three feet apart and the parent plants set about one and one-half feet apart in the rows. The plants are allowed to form runners and set new plants at will until the resulting matted rows are the desired width. Beyond this no additional runners are allowed to develop. For garden conditions the matted rows should be about two feet wide and the vacant space between the rows at least one foot wide. Below is a diagram showing more clearly the matted row system.



Matted Row System

Of these three commonly used systems the hill system is probably the best adapted for boys and girls club work. This system may not produce the most fruit, but if properly cared for the largest and best quality fruit will result. We always believe that for home use, at least, one good berry is worth more than two poor ones. Of course, every club member can use any of these systems, but we would advise one to stick to the system with which he started.

Time of Planting.

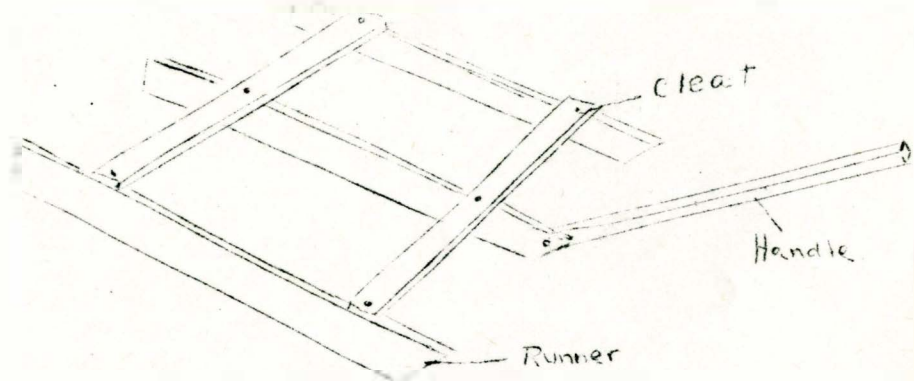
In the northwest there is really but one time that strawberry plants should be set and that is in the spring. If the soil is dry when the plants are received, it is best to heel them in until after a good rain. Of course, the plants may be set in dry soil and then artificially watered, but they usually do not do as well when watered artificially.

How to Plant.

The land should be in good tilth and contain plenty of plant food. First the bed should be raked smooth then laid out with a marker both ways. If the plants are to be planted by the hill system, $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet apart, run a $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet marker both ways. Where the marks intersect are the points where the plants are to be set.

A marker can be easily made by placing boards 1 by 4 inches and about three feet long, on edge, like sled runners. These are placed as far apart as the rows are to be, then fastened together by two narrow strips of inch board nailed lightly on top. When it is desired to change the space, the nails can be pulled and the runners changed and again nailed.

A HOME MADE MARKER



Before setting, the plants should be trimmed or pruned. All but a few of the smaller leaves should be pinched or cut off to guard against loss of moisture. The roots should be shortened by trimming



Before and after pruning
Previous to setting

a pair of old shears. This makes planting more convenient. Never allow the roots to be exposed to the sun or wind while being set. A bucket lined and covered with wet sacks will insure proper conditions for the plants. An ordinary spade is a good tool for planting. Insert the spade in the soil and push forward. This leaves an opening behind the spade into which the plant may readily be set. Always see that the roots are well spread out before setting. Press the soil firmly about the roots with the hands or feet. When the operation is completed, the crown of the plant should be exactly at the ground level. This is very important as a strawberry plant set too

or too low will not live. Do not be afraid to firm the soil solidly about the roots as loosely set plants seldom survive.

Cultivation.

After every rain break up the crust that has formed on the surface of the soil. This can be done with an ordinary hoe. This helps to keep the moisture in the soil and will result in more rapid growth by the plants. Keep an ever watchful eye for weeds in the strawberry bed. If they get the start of the young strawberry plants, the plants cannot be expected to bear much fruit.

Next month we will take up such subjects as care of runners, snipping of blossoms, etc.