PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS
FOR THE
CULTIVATION OF HOPS,
AND THEIR PREPARATION FOR MARKET.

OF THE SOIL FOR HOPS.

Medium loam is best, though any of the loam mixtures between sand and clay will do; but the more sandy the soil, the more manure is required to keep up the necessary fertility and protect the plant from the effects of the drouth and frosts; while the clayey soils require much manure to give them mellowness and prevent the ground from baking. In consequence of its porous condition, a sandy soil requires heavier and steady manuring; while, after the first season, clay, as it retains its fertilizing properties, requires much less. Land upon which one or two crops have been raised is best, as the vegetable fibres are well decomposed and the soil is in a fresh and vigorous condition. A medium loam, exhausted by a series of wheat or corn crops, not having been drained of some of the essential properties, requires only the usual amount of manuring to bring it into fit condition. Elevated locations should be selected, as in low, moist places, hops are exposed to the frost and liable to rust.

PLANTING.

The root planting season is from the earliest period at which hops can be grubbed in the spring until the middle of May, and in this latitude they are occasionally planted as late as the first of June. Early spring planting is advisable, as it admits of the plant growing beyond harm from the cut worm, and it will better withstand the early drouths.

Seed roots are cut into pieces containing two sets of eyes each, and are valuable in proportion to their soundness, the quantity of thread fibres they contain, and the species to which they belong. The majority of the yards of Wisconsin are of the English Cluster, the vigorous habits, prolific condition, and richness in lupulin of which give it preference in this climate, and unless it should prove to be unusually liable to attacks of disease or vermin, it will probably never have a rival in this State.

To insure success against disease and worms, from three to four pieces are put in a hill, while really two good sound roots are suf-
ficient. The planting is done in rows, eight feet apart each way, making six hundred and eighty hills to the acre, though only six hundred and fifty hills are commonly reckoned—a vacant space on either side, left for turning the team, being considered.

The ground should be prepared thoroughly, in about the same manner as for corn, and well pulverized. Too much stress cannot be laid upon this: and especially the ground should be plowed deep, to allow the bed roots to go down. The hills should not be less than eight feet apart each way; and as the yard once planted lasts for years, great pains should be taken to make the hills at a uniform distance, so as to be in a perfect line in all directions.

The selected piece is accurately squared, stakes stuck at the four corners, and a row of short stakes stuck, eight feet apart, the entire length of each side. A wire or rope—a wire is preferable, as it will not stretch—with a piece of red yarn attached to it every eight feet, and a sharpened stake attached to each end to manage it by, is stretched across the end of the piece. A man at each end carries the wire along, and stops long enough at each stake to strengthen it, and give time for one or two boys, with baskets of pins, eight or ten inches long, to pass along and place a pin at each piece of yarn. These stakes should be of some light colored wood, so as to be easily distinguishable, as thereby any deviation from straight lines would be more easily detected.

Our method of planting is as follows: We take a stick, sharpened, about eighteen inches long, and about an inch and a half in diameter, and make a hole large and deep enough to receive the roots, into which we put them, in a bunch, eyes up, upper ends even, to the depth of an inch or an inch and a half below the surface. Still holding them in this position, with the stick we firmly press the earth down beside them, taking pains to bring it in contact with them throughout the whole length, otherwise a dead air cell will be left, which is often fatal to them. Now we fill the hole to the surface and replace the stake, which had been removed to allow of planting.

The planting completed, commence at the fifth hill of the fifth row and take up every tenth hill therein, to within five hills of the other side. Do the same with every tenth row thereafter, to within five rows of the opposite end, and replace with male roots, (which are furnished in proper proportion), and put two stakes to the hill to distinguish them. The cost of cultivating the first season can be turned into profit by planting corn, potatoes or beans between the rows, and cultivating with the hops. Our preference is for potatoes, or alternate rows of potatoes and corn, as they shade the young plants from the sun less than corn alone. To raise part of a crop of hops the first season, (which we do not recommend, as we think the result rarely justifies the expense), no other crop should be planted with them, and but one pole, ten or twelve feet long, placed to the hill. One, two or three vines can be trained to the pole, according to the strength of the hill. If some judgment is not used, too many vines
will be poled, and the productive powers so overtasked as to enfeeble the root and endanger the prospects of the second crop.

MANURING

Is done in the fall, as it thus serves the double purpose of enriching the soil and protecting the plant from the winter frosts, and should on no account be omitted. Young yards require but little if any protection in winter, while old yards and bearing yards on sandy soils require much. It is, however, just as essential to manure the former as the latter. About a bushel of barn manure to the hill on sandy soil is none too much, and as the quality approaches the clay, the quantity can be reduced, till but two shovels full to the hill are required. That the hops may not be smothered, the manuring should not be done until the approach of winter, and should be removed as soon as the frost is out of the ground.

POLES.

The winter following the planting of the yard will naturally occur to the prospective grower as the proper time to procure and sharpen his poles. These may be of any kind of timber most easily procurable, though, of course, the more durable and symmetrical, the more valuable. Cedar and tamarack are highest in favor, and pine, poplar and basswood lowest. They should be from sixteen to twenty feet in length, and two and a half to four inches in diameter at the butt, with a true taper to the top, which should be not less than one inch through. They should be trimmed closely to enable the box-tender to remove the vines easily at picking time. The taper of the pole will prevent the vines from slipping when loaded with hops.

The poles being piled convenient to the yard, the work of sharpening commences. Tie three poles securely together within three or four feet from the tops, rear them up and spread their butts in the form of a triangle. Nearly under the centre of these poles place a block, which is commonly a section of a tree, from one and a half to two and a half feet in diameter, and about one and a half feet high. The pole to be sharpened is now reared on end, with the butt on the block and the top in the crotch of the poles. With an ax—a carpenter’s hand ax is preferred by many—the pole is now sharpened to a true taper, beginning about eighteen inches from the butt. It is best to ross the pole a few inches higher up, as it is less liable to rot. As they are sharpened they should be piled ready to scatter on the yard before the ground breaks up in the spring.

GRUBBING.

The hop plant has two kinds of roots—the top or “bed roots,” and the lateral roots, or “runners, as they are technically called. These last have eyes, like the potato, and are the roots from which the plant is propagated. They are not thrown out until the second season. The second spring after planting, these must, therefore, be