
Cuthill's Fruit and Vegetable Manual

Cuthill James

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Author: Cuthill James

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FRUIT AND VEGETABLE
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BY
JAMES CUTHILL, F.R.H.S.

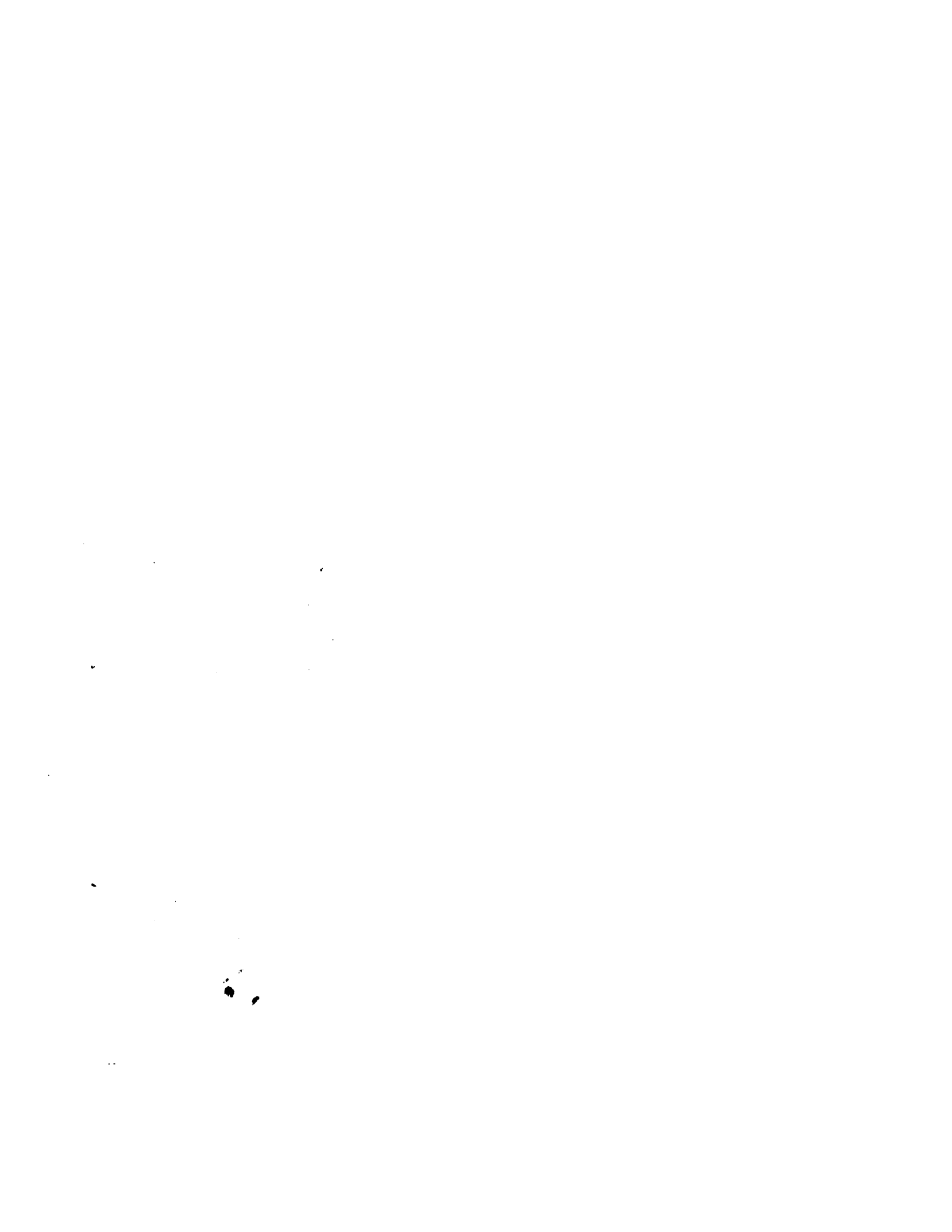
CONTAINING
THE AUTHOR'S TREATISES UPON

MARKET GARDENING.	THE STRAWBERRY.
THE POTATO.	THE VINE.
THE CUCUMBER AND MELON.	THE MUSHROOM.

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MARKET GARDENING,

OR THE

VARIOUS METHODS ADOPTED BY GARDENERS

IN GROWING

FOR THE LONDON MARKETS.

BY

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OF CAMBERWELL, LONDON;

Author of "A Prize Essay on the Potato," "The Cucumber and Melon," "The Cultivation of the Mushroom," "A Treatise on the Strawberry," and "A Treatise on the Vine."



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1870.

MARKET GARDENING.

GENERAL REMARKS.

ALL admit that London furnishes the finest flowers, fruits, and vegetables in the world ; and the reason is, London contains the world's wealth, being the great resort of the aristocracy, and the very centre of commerce. This being the case, market gardeners have always got the highest prices for their goods. This stimulates them to greater exertions to get heavier crops, and those of the finest quality. Manure, the very "gold dust" of high cultivation, with them is cheap and plentiful : without this, the London market gardeners would not be one bit better than those of any other neighbourhood. In addition to this, London being such a large city, the suburbs even, on account of the large number of horses, cows, pigs, &c., which are kept in them, yield great quantities of rich manures ; therefore market gardeners so situated get their manure at the cheapest rate. The large competition which exists among growers makes them very quick, and most excellent men of business. They have good selected seed, proper times of sowing and planting, with an enormous quantity of seed-beds always ready. I have seen myself acres of seed-beds of cabbages upon one man's ground, and every one of them planted out by November.

I have lived in what are called the Fulham Fields,

which are market grounds; this district lies west of London on the north bank of the Thames, with a very gentle slope to the river, running westward some eight miles, and bounded on the north side by the Brentford or great western road, containing many thousand acres. This is the spot where the finest things are grown in general; but there is a tract of ground, less or more on the Surrey or south side of the Thames, reaching from Camberwell all the way to Richmond, a distance of some ten miles, which is little, if any, inferior. The Surrey market gardeners also produce first-rate things, and were they as close upon London, with no tolls to pay in taking their produce to market, they would match the Fulham growers. Then, again, there is a district between London Bridge and Greenwich called the "Jamaica Level," this is also on the south side of the Thames. This low-lying piece of ground is very rich of itself, having been washed by the Thames, which has left a rich deposit of soil many feet deep—so deep, that the very best Liquorice has been grown there. This part produces very fine strawberries, rhubarb, horse-radish, and the finest seakale of all. These, then, are the principal districts near and around London. Then, further into Kent, "the garden of fruits of England," great quantities and great varieties are grown there for the London markets; for instance, very early peas and asparagus round Gravesend, &c., with enormous crops of fruits of all sorts, spread here and there all over the county. Then we cross the Thames into Essex: there again they produce peas, beans, cabbages, onions, &c., even as far down as Colchester, whence famous early asparagus, &c., is sent to town. In leaving Essex, passing along the northern skirts of the city, touching part of Hertford, the land in general is not so congenial, being mostly clay; here

very little, except at Enfield, is produced for the London markets. Then, westward of Brentford, in the districts of Isleworth, Hounslow,* Teddington, &c., the very finest productions are raised. Then Bedfordshire supplies cucumbers by the waggon-load. Turnip-tops come as far off as from Buckingham and Berkshire; besides the enormous quantities of hampers of all sorts of vegetables sent by families, &c., London swallows up everything, with its three millions, and its tens of thousands going in and coming out: still no town in the world is better supplied with fruits, vegetables and flowers.

Some years back, I took the late Mr. Smith, of Deanston, over part of the Fulham gardens; he was perfectly astonished. He looked for big hedges, big ditches, and weeds, but none were to be seen. The grand secret after all is in a nutshell. Continual dunging, trenching, or bastard-trenching (that is, the dung and part of the top mould put in, and one spit afterwards), hoeing whether there are weeds or not, with the best of seed, and attention paid to the proper times of sowing and planting. There is no drawing up of the mould to keep the cabbages, as some suppose, from being blown down. Drawing up the mould is never practised by the best gardeners. Market gardeners know that after an active crop the top soil for several inches deep is entirely exhausted, and hence the reason for continual trenching, in order to bring up the top soil, that but a few months before had been turned down, with a large proportion of dung, to enrich it and fit it for active use along with the half-decayed manure.

Market gardeners keep a great many pigs. Mr.

* I was not aware of the great extent of market grounds here until I went down with the late Mr. Hume, M.P., to settle about his market-ground estate, near Hounslow.

George Bagley is quite famed for a good breed; he tries to keep his stock up to 100 or more; he has a steaming- or cooking-house for their food. Nothing pays equal to pigs. They grow even faster than vegetables. They eat all sorts of vegetable stems and leaves, and turn everything quickly into manure.

It was one time considered by market gardeners to be beneath their notice to grow flowers, but now they all do so—such as stocks, pinks, picotees, cloves, ranunculuses, anemones, heart's-ease, daisies, auriculas, geraniums, mignonette, polyanthuses, violets, roses, and every saleable blossom of every sort.

Railroads have done wonders. The old market gardeners are astounded at present prices; but they do not suffer so much, since they get everything cheap for their use.

Growers of seeds suffer most, as the Continental cultivators sell theirs so cheap.

We must not overlook the herb grounds round London, which are very interesting. The district where herbs are cultivated is Mitcham, in Surrey, about nine miles south-west of London, where hundreds of acres of all sorts are grown. As the stranger approaches that locality in the summer time, with the wind in the south-west, the combination of odours can easily be discovered in the air, which is "redolent with sweetness." There are hundreds of acres of liquorice, of lavender, and peppermint, for distillation, &c. The cultivation of mint is very easy and simple; it is ploughed-in every winter. This does not destroy the mint-roots; on the contrary, it improves them, as it kills all weeds, and the mint grows up in rows abundantly strong the next year. Liquorice is planted in deep, well-manured ground, eighteen inches row from row, and nine inches plant from plant. When the stems and leaves are in full growth, they look like

a plantation of sapling ash trees, growing to the height of four and five feet: these are cut down every year, and the horizontal root, or rhizomes, travel along the surface: these having joints and eyes, are the propagating root. Every one must be forked up every winter. They are sold for sweetening beer, &c.; but they are not near so sweet as the real root, which descends many feet into the ground. The crop is taken up once in four or five years, according to the state of the land. Lavender is a more important crop; this occupies some two or three hundred acres; for this the ground is trench-ploughed. They are planted two feet each way: during the second year, an acre will fetch £20 for distilling purposes. The heads are used for fine oil, the flower stems for rougher oils. The proper time to cut is when the lower blooms are just beginning to turn brown: and after cutting, the sooner it is distilled the better; for if left too long, they lose much of their fragrance. But Mitcham grows all other sorts of herbs: and even the London birds are not forgotten—groundsel, chickweed, and all other things. I saw, in fact, men, women, and children, who had nothing else to talk about but herbs! herbs! herbs!

Then there are the numerous forcing grounds round London in every direction, for forcing every description of fruits and vegetables of the finer sorts, and salads of all sorts, as well as all sorts of sweet herbs, &c., &c.—large mushroom grounds, &c., &c. Everything is grown round London that will “turn a penny.”

