

Hop Plantation.

Sydney Gazette. January 20, 1805

Culture of Hops in Great Britain.

We are extremely thankful to the Gentleman who favours us with the following transcript of a valuable dissertation on the culture of the hop in Great Britain; as by due attention to the difference of situation, and consequently of season, we hope it may become useful to persons who incline to the experiment of rearing the valuable plant in this colony.

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‘A rich, deep, mellow, dry soil, rather inclining to sand than clay, is, in general, best adapted to the cultivation of hops; but a black garden mould is excellent for this purpose; stiff clays, spewy lands, such as are apt to be overflowed by floods, hard gravels, stony grounds, very sandy ones, and such as are not at least a foot and half deep, are altogether improper for hops.

“The best situation for hop-grounds is such as inclines to the South, or lies open to it, so that they may have the benefit of the sun during the greatest part of the day. It must also be open, for the air to have a free passage and circulation between the plants, and it should be sheltered to the East, North and West, that neither the frosty winds in the spring may cut off the young sprouts, nor the more stormy ones in summer and autumn destroy the full grown crops.

“The ground and situation being chosen, the next business is to prepare it for planting. In many parts of England, when the ground is broken up for this purpose, the plough goes first, and men follow it with the spades, with which they dig one spit deep, in the furrows where the plough has passed, throw up the earth thus dug, and so continue to plough and dig till the whole is done. Either this tillage, if it be well performed, or the deep ploughings, cross ploughings, and harrowings, by which careful husbandmen prepare their land for corn, will fit this for being sown with turnip seeds in the end of July, or beginning of August, and if the turnips are hoed twice, so as to be left about eight inches asunder, they will yield a good crop, the weeds will be destroyed, and the ground will be rendered loose and fine. Another good ploughing after the turnips are taken off, will, with the ensuing winter mellowing, render it fit for being planted with hops in the spring.

“The best time to begin ploughing is in October, in order that the soil may be properly prepared to receive the benefits of the winter’s frosts, rains, and snows; after which in the beginning of spring, it should be well and deeply ploughed again, and well harrowed; and after another ploughing in March, which will be of very great service, it should be harrowed fine, and laid as even as can be.

“When the ground is in proper readiness for planting, stretch along a straight side of the field, at fifteen or twenty feet distance from the hedge, and parallel to it, a line with knots or rags tied in it, as far asunder as you design your hills to be, and stick in the ground a sharp pointed stick at every knot, as marks for the places where the hills are to be made; continue the line in this manner the whole length of the ground, and from this first row you may mark out the rest of the field, either in squares, chequer wise at the intended distance of the hills, or in the quincunx<sup>1</sup> form, where the hills of every row lie opposite to the middle of the first, in a triangular form.

“The distance of the hills should be, in some measure, regulated by the nature and goodness of the soil: but, in every case. They should be far enough asunder to admit the hoe plough at all times without danger to the plants. If the soil be dry and shallow, six or seven feet will be a convenient distance: but if it be rich, moist, and apt to bear large hops and leaves, it may be right to allow eight or nine feet between hills.

“The most proper season for planting hops is from the beginning of March to the near middle of April, as the time when they begin to shoot. The Kentish husbandmen approve likewise of October; but the common sorts are not to be procured then, unless it be from a ground that is to be dug up and destroyed; besides, which, there is some danger of their rotting in the earth, if the winter should prove very wet.

“There are several sorts, though the botanists allow one species of hops. The most esteemed are, the long white, the oval, and the long square garlic hop. These differ from each other in the colour and the shape of the bells, or hops, in degree of bearing, and their time of ripening. The long white is most valued, because it is a great bearer, and produces the most beautiful hops; for the beauty of hops conflicts in their being of a pale bright green colour. The oval hop is beautiful, but does not yield so large a crop. There is a sort of this kind of white hop, called the early, rash hop, which ripens a week or ten days before the common, and is therefore of advantage to those who would be first at market; but it is tenderer than the other, and does not bear so plentifully. The long square garlic hop is the greatest bearer, more

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<sup>1</sup> A definition of ‘Quincunx’, can be found here: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quincunx>.

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hardy, and some what later ripe than the former; but by reason of its redness towards the stalk, it is not so beautiful to the eye, and therefore is not much esteemed as the other sorts.

“Few hop grounds are without some plants of a sort of hop which many call the female hop, but very erroneously; for the female hop is that which is cultivated for use, and this, which others name more properly the wild hop, is the male. Towards the middle of July, it puts out a great number of long loose bunches of small flowers, not at all like the true hop; and in somewhat less than a month after, that is to say, just before the true hop begins to blossom, they ripen, and with the least motion of the wind shed a sarina, which is wafted all around, and is by some, not improbably, thought to be of use to impregnate other hops. Those who are of this opinion, advise therefore, to leave one or two hills of them standing in the hop ground. But the common practice is to mark them at their first appearance, and to root them out afterwards, because they do not bear bells or hops, and as they are generally the strongest plants seeds<sup>2</sup> might be otherwise be taken from them by mistake.

“There is also a poor flavoured hop called a wild hop which is not judged to be distinct sort, but a hop which has degenerated for want of culture.

“The planter of hops ought to be extremely careful in the choice of his plants, or set, particularly in regard to the kind of the hop: for it is a great trouble and loss to him when his garden proves to be a mixture of several sorts of hops, ripening at different times. He who plants the three sorts above mentioned, viz, the early, the long white, and the square hop, in three distinct parts of his ground, will have the convenience of picking them frequently as they become ripe.

“Hop sets are cuttings taken from the branches which grow from the main root or stock. They should be procured if possible, from the grounds planted with none, but the sort, which is desired; and they should be from five to seven or eight inches long, with three or more joints or buds on them, all the old bine<sup>3</sup> and hollow part of the set being cut off.

“The ground being prepared for planting, as before directed, towards the latter end of February, or in the beginning of March, if the soil be light, or late March if it be strong and moist, make, in the places marked out by the sticks stuck in them, holes about 12 or 16 inches wide, and to the depth proportioned to the nature of the ground: — in general 10 or 12 inches will be sufficient depth. If the ground be shallow, and you meet with hard clay or gravel, by no means enter into this, for you would the make a basin to retain water; but in such case, instead of going deeper, raise up the small hill of good mould. If there is a good depth of rich mellow mould, dig the hole a foot and a half or two feet deep, and you will find the hops thrive better; for their top roots run downward.

“When all things are ready for planting, fill up the holes with the mould before thrown out of them, if it be naturally good, after having first broke it with a fine spade; but if the same earth be not rich enough, make use fine fresh mould, or of the compost provided for this purpose. About a peck or two of this will be sufficient for each hill; but no new dung should be put into the hole on any account.

“Then with a dibble or a setting stick, such as gardeners generally use for planting of beans, make five or six holes, the depth of your sets, one in the middle, perpendicular and the rest round about, sloping and meeting at the top near the center; put your sets therein, so that they may stand even with the surface of the ground; and then press the mould close to them, and cover them with the fine mould two or three inches thick; a stick should be placed on each side of the hill to secure it.

“The ground being thus planted, all that is to be done in the following summer is to keep the hills and valleys free from weeds by frequent hoeing; to dig the ground in the month of May, and to carry off all the stones that are turned up by digging; to raise a small hill about the plants; to throw some fine mould on their roots; and in the later end of May or beginning of June, to twist all the vines or branches together into a bunch or loose knot, and lay them twisted on top of the hill.

“Towards the latter end of February or in the beginning of March in the second year, when the weather is kindly, open the hills and with a sharp knife cut off the shoots of the first year to within an inch of the old stock together with all the younger suckers that have sprung from the sets, and cover the stock with fine earth: — to keep the knife sharp you should have a whetstone always by you at dressing.

“In the third and following years, when you dig your hop-ground in February, let the earth be taken away with a spade or hoe, round about the hill very near them, that you may be the more conveniently come at the stock to cut it; then in the fair weather, towards the beginning of March, if your hops be weak begin to dress them; but if they are strong and in heart, the middle or latter end of March will be the best time; for late dressing restrains their too early springing, which is the cause of many injuries to the hop.

“After the hops are dressed in the second year, the next business is to pole them; poles of only 10 or 12 feet long will do them; but in the third year, by which time they come to their full bearing state, they will require poles of full size: — this, if the ground be rich and the hop vigorous, will be from 16 to 20 feet, or even more, or there will be a danger of losing great part of the crop.

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<sup>2</sup> Printed as fe\_s, where f is commonly interpreted as ‘S’ in most cases. An example of this is miftake, which represents the word mistake. The underscore ‘\_’ is the unrecognisable letter or letters.

<sup>3</sup> The original document uses the word bind.