

Upon a former occasion I had examined the culture of hops at Stowmarket and shall insert here the notes I took.

“In the neighbourhood of that place there are about 200 acres of them; but 18 or 20 acres are grubbed up and turned to meadow within two years, owing to the badness of the times. The soil they plant on, is a black loose moor, on a gravelly bottom, very wet and boggy, lying on a dead level with the little river that runs by the town; the more boggy and loose it is, the better the hops thrive, especially if the gravel be within three feet; the neighbouring grounds rise in such a manner as to shelter them very well. Before planting, these morassy bottoms were coarse meadow, worth about 20 s. an acre, and some much less. In preparing them for hops, they form them into beds 16 feet wide, by digging trenches about three feet wide, and two feet, or two feet and a half deep, the earth that comes out being spread upon the beds, and the whole dug and levelled. Immediately upon this, they, in March, form the holes six feet asunder every way, 12 inches diameter, and a spit deep, consequently there are three rows on each bed. Into each hole they put about half a peck of very rotten dung, or rich compost, scatter earth upon it, and plant seven sets in each, drawing earth enough to them afterwards to form something of a hillock. Some persons in the first year sow french beans, or beans, and plant cabbages, but not reckoned a good way by Mr. Rout, to whose obliging communication I owe the particulars from which I draw this account: in about two or three weeks, but according to the season, they will be fit to pole with old short poles, to which they tie all the shoots or vines, and then keep the land clean by hoeing and raking; at midsummer they hill them. The produce the first year will be three, four, and even five hundred weight of hops per acre. After this they reckon them as a common plantation, and manage accordingly.

Manure is not always given regularly; but amounts, upon an average, to 10 loads a year, value 5 s. a load in the plantation. They keep it till it would run through a sieve, which they prefer to a more putrid state.

The labour of forming the beds for a new plantation by digging the drains, & amounts to 4 l. an acre. That of the annual work, picking excepted, is put out to the men at 4 l. an acre per annum, for which they dig, strip, stack, clean drains, hoe, rake, hole, tie, &.

Three poles are put to each hill, consequently there are 30 hundred (at 120) to the acre, at 24 s. a hundred delivered. They are generally of ash, and the length they prefer is 24 feet. But in addition to this regular poling, when a hop raises much above a pole, they set another to take the shoot to prevent its falling, preventing the circulation of air, and entangling with the poles of other hills.

A hop garden will last almost for ever, by renewing the hills that fail, to the amount of about a score annually; but it is reckoned better to grub up and new plant it every twenty or twenty-five years.

The only distempers to which they are subject, are the fly and the honey-dew; they know the blast and the red worm, but they are rare; the latter chiefly on dry land. Lightening they think favourable, as it kills flies and lice.

Mr. Rout has raised a bank against the river about three feet high, to lessen the force of floods; but does not wish to keep them entirely out; as he finds, that if the water comes in gently, and does not wash the earth away, it is rather beneficial. And, he is clear, that if he was to let the river into his drains to a certain height, in very dry weather, it would be of service to the crop”