CELERY CULTURE IN BEDS.

BY GEORGE GRAY,

Head Gardener, Ewell Castle, Surrey.

CELERY culture is not attended with many difficulties, but in small gardens the results are not usually so satisfactory as one could wish, and I have thought that a few words explanatory of the most desirable system would be of considerable service to many of the readers of the FLORAL WORLD. I shall be as brief as possible, and confine my attention to celery-growing in small gardens.

The celery crop must not be exposed to rough treatment at any stage of its growth; for if it suffers from neglect, it will be found, when lifted for table, to be of an inferior quality, if not comparatively useless. One of the most essential points in celery-culture is to defer sowing the seed until such times as there will be no difficulty in growing the plants on vigorously from the first. It is one of the greatest mistakes that could possibly be made to sow the seed and raise the plants in heat long before it is possible to provide the necessary accommodation for the plants to keep them in a progressive state, yet it is frequently done in the gardens of all classes. If celery is required for use in August, and there is an abundance of frame-room, a sowing may be made early in February; but for crops of an ordinary degree of earliness, the last week in February, or the first week in March will be quite early enough. But for the main crop, the third and fourth week in March will be sufficiently early. For small gardens, one sowing will be quite sufficient, as it will afford a succession as long as could well be maintained in a limited space; successional sowings and successional plantings of celery are of less importance than of the majority of vegetables, for the crop ready for table in the autumn will be available for use until the following spring, provided it is protected from severe frosts.

We will therefore suppose that the latter end of March is fixed upon for sowing the seed, but it will be well to observe that the details of sowing and after management of early and late sowings do not differ in any material manner, excepting that the plants from the earliest sowing must have the assistance of a slight hotbed, and be kept under glass much longer. Sow the seed in well-drained pans, or boxes, filled with a light and rich compost, and then place them in a cucumber or melon-pit, in which a temperature of 70 or 80 degs. is maintained, as a generous warmth is of great assistance in enabling the seed to germinate quickly. The soil will require to be kept rather moist, and when the plants are well above the surface, increase the water supply, and place them near the glass to keep them dwarf and stocky. To prevent any misapprehension, I will observe, in passing, that celery seed may also be raised in any of the fruit-houses, or, in fact, in the greenhouse; but, of course, owing to the lowness of the temperature, it will be longer in vegetating in the last-mentioned structure.

As soon as the plants are about an inch in height, harden them off sufficiently to bear the temperature of a cold frame. Whilst this is being done, mix together equal parts of friable loam, and partly-decayed manure, and with this compost make up a bed of about six inches in thickness in a frame placed in a warm situation. Prick them out on this bed at a distance of three inches apart, and when the planting is completed, give them a liberal soaking of tepid water to settle the soil about the roots. It will be necessary to shade the plants in bright weather, and also to keep the frame rather close during the first few days. The only other attention they will require until strong enough for planting out, will be to supply them liberally with water and to keep the frame well ventilated. After they are well established, it will be difficult to admit too much air, for celery is by no means tender after it has been properly hardened off.

The most general way of growing celery is in single rows in separate trenches. Where the space is ample for all the crops, nothing can be said against the system, and for early crops it is unquestionably the best that could be adopted. But in the case of small gardens, it is more advantageous to grow it in beds of six rows each, as by that means quite seventy per cent. more can be produced in a given space than when it is planted in single rows.

In the formation of the beds, mark out a space six feet in width, and throw out the soil on each side to a depth of two feet; then, in the bottom of the trench, put about nine inches of manure from an old hotbed, and cover with three inches of soil. They will then be in readiness for the reception of the plants; but it is desirable to prepare the bed a short time beforehand. Some little diversity of opinion exists as to the proper distance at which the plants should be put apart, but by planting them nine inches apart, in rows fourteen inches from each other, good heads will be secured without an inch of the space being wasted. A dull, showery day should, if possible, be selected for putting the plants out, as they will then suffer very little indeed, provided they are well watered, and are not allowed to suffer for the want of moisture until they are established. It will not always be desirable to wait for showers, but when done in bright weather, a slight shade of mats, canvas, or branches of evergreen laid over them, will be highly beneficial, if supplemented with moderate sprinklings of water overhead every evening. It is always preferable to defer the systematic earthings-up until the plants have made considerable progress; for when earthed-up early, the growth is checked considerably.

During the progress of the crop an occasional dressing of well-pulverized soil spread between the plants will be of considerable assistance. In earthing the celery up, it is important not to put too much soil at one time, because of the check it gives to the plants, and also to do it in such a manner that the soil will not reach the hearts. First of all, tie a piece of old bast rather loosely round each plant, just to keep the leafstalks close together, and take two light boards, five inches in width, and the same length as the bed. Supposing we commence with the two end rows, the boards are

placed between them, and the space between the boards is filled with soil to a depth of four inches. When this is done, the board nearest the end is drawn out gently and put on the other side of the second row, against which the other leans. As soon as this is accomplished, the second board is drawn out and placed against the third row, so as to keep the soil in its place whilst it is being filled in between the second and third rows as was done between the first and second. This process of shifting the boards and filling in the soil is repeated until all the rows have been earthed up. In drawing out each board the soil should be placed nicely about the plants with the hand. By the use of boards as here advised, a large bed can be earthed up in a very short space of time. At each operation, the soil should be taken equally from both sides of the bed, and be also well broken up with the spade before it is used for filling in.

The best sorts for table are, Williams's *Matchless Red*, and Turner's *Incomparable White*. The large-growing sorts, in the way of *Hooley's Conqueror*, are too coarse for the table.

THE VARIETIES OF KALE, OR BORECOLE.

Report on Kales grown in the Garden at Chiswick in 1871–2. By ROBERT HOGG, LL.D., F.L.S. Pomological Director to the Royal Horticultural Society. From the Society's "Journal."

IT is exactly ten years since the last trial of kales was made in the Garden of the Society. That was a very partial one in comparison with this upon which I am now about to report, the number of varieties being much less, and the various names under which the different varieties were received greatly more numerous. When I reported on the same subject in 1862, I was struck by the amazing confusion in which the kales were found; and my surprise has not been lessened by the present trial.

From the very much fuller character of this year's experiments, I have been enabled in many cases to add to, and in some to correct, those of 1862. This I have been enabled to do by the very prompt and liberal manner in which the members of the seed trade have placed their collections at the disposition of the Society.

It is proper here to state that, although many errors in nomenclature are to be found in this report, apparently originating among the seedsmen, no blame is to be attributed to them, nor is there to be any impeachment of their good faith on that account; for this confusion of nomenclature has existed not only for years, but for generations, and, however anxious they may have been to correct it, the task was one most difficult of accomplishment.

Now, however, that something like order has been attained, I trust that a more general concurrence in nomenclature will be maintained.

ASPARAGUS KALE.—The original asparagus kale of a century and a half ago was a sprouting broccoli, which was introduced from