of certain varieties of wheat cultivated in that region is, in favourable seasons, possessed of a fine bright colour and due tenacity and strength. The straw is cut as in ordinary har­vesting, but is allowed to dry in the sun before binding. Sub­sequently straws are selected from the sheaves, and of these the pipes of the two upper joints are taken for plaiting. The pipes are assorted into sizes by passing them through graduated openings in a grilled wire frame, and those of good colour are bleached by the fumes of sulphur. Spotted and discoloured straws are dyed either in pipe or in plait. The plaiters work up the material in a damp state, either into whole straw or split straw plaits. Split straws are prepared with the aid of a small instrument having a projecting point which enters the straw pipe, and from which radiate the number of knife-edged cutters into which the straw is to be split. The plaiting of straw in the countiesof Bucks., Beds., Berks, and Herts, formerly gave employment to many thousands of women and young children; but now vast quantities of plaits are imported at a very cheap rate from Italy, China and Japan. The result is that, while the Luton trade in the manufacture of straw and fancy hats of every description has largely extended, the number of English plaiters, all told, was not more than a few hundreds in 1907, as compared with 30,000 in 1871. The plaits are sewed partly by hand and in a special sewing-machine, and the hats or bonnets are finished by stiffening with gelatin size and blocking into shape with the aid of heat and powerful pressure, according to the dictates of fashion.

In the United States straw-plait work is principally centred in the state of Massachusetts.

Many substances besides straw are worked into plaits and braids for bonnets. Among these may be noticed thin strips of willow and cane and the fronds of numerous palms. “ Brazilian ” hats made from the fronds of the palmetto palms, *Sabal palmetto* and 5. *mexicana,* are now largely made at St Albans. the famous Panama hats, fine qualities of which were at one time worth £20 to £30 each, are made from the leaves of the screw pine, *Carludovica palmata.* They arc now manufactured at Dresden, Strassburg and Nancy, and can be purchased at 30s. or £2.

**STRAWBERRY** *(Fragaria).—*Apart from its interest as a dessert fruit, the strawberry has claims to attention by reason of the peculiarities of its structure and the excellent illustrations it offers of the inherent power of variation possessed by the plant and of the success of the gardener in availing himself of this tendency. The genus *Fragaria* consists of about eight species, native of the north temperate regions of both hemi­spheres, as well as of mountain districts in warmer climes; one species is found in Chile. The tufted character of the plant, and its habit of sending out long slender branches (runners) which produce a new bud at the extremity, are well known. The leaves have usually three leaflets palmately arranged, but the number of leaflets may be increased to five or reduced to one. While the flower has the typical Rosaceous structure, the so-called fruit is very peculiar, but it may be understood by the contrast it presents with the “ hip ” of the rose. In the last- named plant the top of the flower-stalk expands as it grows into a vase-shaped cavity, the “ hip,” within which are concealed the true fruits or seed-vessels. In the rose the extremity of the floral axis is concave and bears the carpels in its interior. In the strawberry the floral axis, instead of becoming concave, swells out into a fleshy, dome-shaped or flattened mass in which the carpels or true fruits, commonly called pips or seeds, are more or less embedded but never wholly concealed. A ripe strawberry in fact may be aptly compared to the “ fruit ” of a rose turned inside out.

The common wild strawberry of Great Britain (fig. 1), which indeed is found throughout Europe and great part of temperate Asia and North America, is *Fragaria vesca,* and this was the first species brought under cultivation in the early part of the 17th century. Later on other species were introduced, such as *F. elatior,* a European species, the parent stock of the hautbois strawberries, and especially *F. virginiana* from the United States and *F. chiloensis* from Chile. From these species, crossed and recrossed in various manners, have sprung the vast number of different varieties now enumerated in catalogues, whose characteristics are so inextricably blended that the attempt to trace their exact parentage or to follow out their lineage has become impossible. The varieties at present cultivated vary in the most remarkable degree in size, colour, flavour, shape, degree of fertility, season of ripening, liability to disease and constitution of plant. Some, as previously stated, vary in foliage, others produce no runners, and some vary materially in the relative development of their sexual organs, for, while in most cases the flowers are in appearance hermaphrodite, at least in structure, there is a very general tendency towards a separa­tion of the sexes, so that the flowers are males or females only as to function, even although they may be perfect in construc­tion. This tendency to dioecism is a common characteristic among Rosaceae, and sometimes proves a source of disappoint­ment to the cultivator, who finds his plants barren where he had hoped to gather a crop. This happens in the United States more frequently than in Britain, but when recognized can readily be obviated by planting male varieties in the vicinity of the barren kinds. Darwin, in alluding to the vast amount of variability in the so-called “ fruit ”—a change effected by the art of the horticulturist in less than three centuries—contrasts with this variability the fixity and permanence of character presented by the true fruits, or pips, which are distributed over the surface of the swollen axis. The will and art of the gardener have been directed to the improvement of the one organ, while he has devoted no attention to the other, which conse­quently remains in the same condition as in the wild plant. Too much stress is not, however, to be laid on this point, for it must be remembered that the foliage, which is not specially an object of the gardener’s “ selection,” nevertheless varies considerably.

The larger-fruited sorts arc obtained by crossing from *F. chiloensis* and *F. virginiana,* and the smaller alpines from *F. vesca.* The alpine varieties should be raised from seeds; while the other sorts are continued true to their kinds by runners. If new varieties are desired, these are obtained by judicious crossing and seeding.

The seeds of the alpines should be saved from the finest fruit ripened early in the summer. They may at once be sown, either in a sheltered border outdoors or in pots, or better in March under glass, when they will produce fruits in June of the same year. The soil should be rich and light, and the seeds very slightly covered by sifting over them some leaf-mould or old decomposed cow dung. When the plants appear and have made five or six leaves, they are