
Note on the Raising of Eucalypts in the Nursery.

By P. RYAN

THE seeds may be sown in green-houses, cold frames or in ordinary nursery beds. It is advisable to wait until May for the carrying out of this operation as if sown earlier the plants will have grown too large when the time comes to plant them out.

The seed bed soil, which should be loamy and free from damping-off fungi, should be brought to as fine a tilth as possible. The seeds

should be covered very lightly with ordinary soil, leaf mould or sawdust. Water should be applied freely in the form of a fine spray.

When the seedlings reach 2 to 3 inches in height they are pricked out into pots or shallow boxes in order to help development of fine feeding roots and to check height growth. If the roots are more than 4 inches long at this stage they may be trimmed. When boxes are used the seedlings are placed 3 inches apart each way. The depth of the soil in the box is usually about 4 inches.

When pricking out is completed the plants are well watered and shaded for a few days to help them recover.

The plants can remain in the boxes or pots until the following April or May when they can be taken to the planting ground undisturbed. During the winter they must be protected from frost as they are very tender at this stage and watering must not be neglected if necessary.

Before removing them from the boxes a sharp knife should be run across and along between the rows in order to cut all long roots after which the plants should be watered immediately. It is often an advantage to carry out this last mentioned operation about a month before planting so that the roots may get a chance to heal. Each plant is lifted out of its box by means of a trowel and planted with its ball of soil attached in a prepared pit.

E spacements for planting are an open question but 10 feet each way seems suitable for Irish conditions.

As an alternative to leaving the plants in boxes or pots during the winter and early spring the practice of moss-balling may be adopted. This is particularly suitable where large numbers of plants have to be transported long distances and it also makes it possible to delay planting until the danger of late frosts has passed. The job is usually done in September. The operation of running the knife across and between the rows as described above is carried out in advance. The plants are lifted out of the boxes and the roots, with some soil attached, are wrapped in sphagnum moss which is tied in position with raffia or binder twine to make an oval ball. The plants are then lined out as close as the moss balls will allow in lines 10 inches apart. A shelter against frost is erected. This is placed about 4 feet above the lines of plants and usually consists of lath screens laid on horizontal wires supported by posts driven into the ground at intervals of 3 or 4 yards. If lath screens are not available branches of laurels, birch or conifers may be used. If there is a danger of wind-frost side shelter may be provided also. The maximum protection should be provided consistent with the normal requirements of evergreen plants in regard to light, air and moisture.