

FRUIT PACKAGES

THE box is fast coming into popular favor as a suitable package for shipping apples in, as well as pears, and many shippers say that the barrel will soon be a thing of the past. However, it will be some time yet before the barrel will be entirely superseded. There are several points in favor of the box, and it is, undoubtedly, by far the best package for early and tender fruit; there is less bulk of the fruit together, and it is, therefore, much easier to keep it at a cool, even temperature. It has plenty of ventilation; there is not so much pressure necessary to keep it tight; it is a handy package to handle; it is square in shape, and utilizes the space on cars or on vessels to better advantage. If to be shipped in cold storage, the fruit can be cooled down to the necessary point very quickly, but it takes a long time to get a barrel cooled to the center. In price, there is little difference between the box and the barrel. The raw material has risen in price, so that a good barrel will cost about 35 cents laid down; what is called the bushel box is laid down for about 12 cents, or 12½ cents. It takes three boxes to the barrel, so it will be seen that the difference in cost is very slight.

It is claimed that nothing but the very choicest fruit should be shipped in boxes, so that the fact of the fruit being in boxes would mean that it was of the very best quality, and that no second grade should be boxed. In British Columbia they use boxes almost entirely for shipping their fruit, and their second grade is shipped in boxes as well as the first, and where no barrels are used this must certainly be done, and it is hard to see how it can be avoided, or just why it should not be done, providing it is properly marked and branded as required by law.

There is as yet no standard fixed as to the size the box should be, and any and every kind and size is being used. Some use the bushel box, so called, holding about one-third of a barrel; others use what is called the 40-lb. box, holding about one-quarter of a barrel, and for extra fancy stuff, especially pears, which are wrapped in paper, a much smaller package, containing only about two or three dozen fruits. There is a difference of opinion among growers and shippers as to whether there should be a standard fixed, or whether everyone should continue to use the size that suited them best. In the St. Lawrence valley, in the neighborhood of Montreal, they are using what is called the Cochrane case, which is fitted with paste-board squares like an egg case. These are used for choice specimens of Wealthy and Fameuse, and it has been highly profitable. The fruit must be of uniform size to fit the squares, and this matter of uniformity in size should be a cardinal point in packing fruit in all kinds of packages. It need not all be large, but the large specimens should be put together. A smaller size can be put up, in which the only difference will be in the size. In all other respects these should be as good as the first, clean and well colored; and these will often—in fact, in most cases—bring as much money in the British market as the larger ones; but good judgment must be used in the grading, as to uniformity, cleanliness and color.

The question of packages for fruit was discussed at the last annual meeting of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association, at Walkerton, but there was such a diversity of opinion as to which was the best size of box to use, that no definite conclusion was arrived at.

However, the matter will come up again,